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Periods of European Literature

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IX.

THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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THE

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PREFACE.

THE period covered by the present work extends from the death of Louis XIV. in 1714 to the death, in 1778, of Voltaire, with whose literary career it exactly coincides. As in other volumes of the series, there is a certain amount of overlapping. At the one end, Swift, Pope, Bolingbroke, Gay, and others, the term of whose life approached the middle of the century, have been already dealt with as properly belonging to the Augustan Ages; at the other, Lessing and the first real attempts at Romance in Germany, a not inconsiderable portion of the writings of Diderot and Rousseau, and two or three works, like Macpherson's *Ossian*, which, as regards mere date, fall well within the limits specified above, are reserved for final judgment as art and part in the Romantic Revolt. While considerable inroads have thus been made upon the Mid-Eighteenth Century at either extremity, no retaliation upon adjacent territory to any extent worth mentioning has been found expedient or practicable.

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The period under review is not prolific of what are usually termed works of imagination—prose fiction always excepted. The reasoning faculty, in the narrower sense, is in the ascendant, and men like Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Berkeley, and Hume have consequently in the past been "be-scoped and be-tendencied" (to borrow a useful phrase from an old contributor to 'Maga') over and over again. It seemed necessary, however, that the process should be repeated, and that the writer should enter with some particularity into the views of representative authors—philosophers, economists, theologians, and critics—as well as into the manner in which they thought proper to express them. It is hoped that in doing so he has succeeded in an earnest endeavour to misrepresent no one. He has been equally solicitous to abstain from rash generalisations, which are doubtless "a great set off" to a book of this kind, but in the long run lead only to disaster.

With practically every French and English work on which an opinion is here expressed, the writer believes that he can claim a first-hand acquaintance. But it is right for him to state frankly that as regards a section of the literature of other European nations —not, be it understood, a very large proportion of the whole—his knowledge is chiefly derived from the sources of information mentioned in the foot-notes. In addition to these, he desires (in common with every critic) to record his obligations to the *Dictionary*

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of National Biography, which it is needless to praise, to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, to *Chambers's Encyclopædia*, a monument of compendiousness and accuracy, to Brockhaus's *Conversations-Lexikon*, and to all the recognised authorities of a similar type.

From his old friend, Mr W. E. Henley, he has received several timely and obliging hints. To the staff of the Advocates' Library he must acknowledge his indebtedness for unfailing courtesy and ready aid. Finally, he has to thank the Editor of this Series as best he may for many invaluable suggestions, for much welcome encouragement, and for the vigilant attention, the unwearied patience, and the imperturbable kindness, with which he has superintended the progress of the following sheets through the press.

EDINBURGH, *April* 1902.

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THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

VOLTAIRE AND THE "AGE OF REASON."

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THE period[1] with which the present volume deals is distinguished by certain well-marked characteristics

[1] Upon the whole period consult, *inter alia*, Gosse, *Eighteenth Century Literature*, 1897; Saintsbury, *A Short History of English Literature*, 1898; Saintsbury, *A Short History of French Literature*, new ed., 1898, and relative volume of *Specimens;* Dowden, *A History*

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from any other in European literature. In none has the flame of poetry sunk so low; in none has the play of intelligence been more lively; in none has there been a more bountiful supply of sheer cleverness. Its great achievement was the bringing to maturity of prose fiction, of which if it be true, in the words of one of its most exquisite practitioners, that it has afforded "more extensive and unaffected pleasure" than any other species of composition, we owe the age a heavy debt of gratitude. Against this must be set the steady decadence of the drama, particularly in England, where since the death of Congreve not more than two or three names at the most have redeemed that kind of writing from comparative mediocrity.

Preliminary.

As in the immediately preceding period, the current of literary activity was fed almost wholly by France and England. In the last quarter of the century, it is true, Germany poured in

France and England.

of French Literature, 1897; Stephen, *Horæ Sabbaticæ*, 3 vols., 1892; Ward's *English Poets*, vol. iii.; Craik's *English Prose Selections*, vol. iv.; *English Men of Letters* series (Macmillan); *Foreign* and *Philosophical Classics for English Readers* series (Blackwood); Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, t. vi., 1898; Brunetière, *Manuel de l'histoire de la Littérature Française*, 1898, and *Études critiques*, 5 vols. v.d.; Faguet, *Histoire de la Litt. Fr.*, t. ii., 1900, and *Dix-huitième siècle*, 1890; Lintilhac, *Précis historique et critique de la Litt. Fr.*, 2 vols., 2nd ed., 1895; Villemain, *Tableau de la Litt. Fr. au xviii^me^ siècle*, 1868; Taine, *L'Ancien Régime*, 12 vols., 22nd ed., 1899; Beljame, *Le Public et les Hommes de Lettres en Angleterre au xviii^me^ siècle*, 2nd ed., 1897; Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, v.d., *passim*; *Les Grands Écrivains Français* series (Hachette); *Classiques populaires* series (Lecène et Oudin); Hettner, *Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1894.

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contributions of inestimable importance. In the face of many discouragements, she produced a national literature which has exercised an incalculable influence upon Europe. But in the years with which we are concerned, England and France had a practical monopoly of "enlightenment." It is a commonplace that never has there been so much literary give-and-take between the two countries. Locke and Newton were heroes as much of the French as of the British. Richardson, who may have taken more than a hint from Marivaux, was made the subject of a characteristically extravagant eulogy by Diderot. Sterne despatched a full cargo of "sentiment" across the Channel, and Diderot and Rousseau paid back the gift twentyfold. No French philosopher's career was complete without a temporary residence in the land where freedom of thought was as well-established an institution as *la brume* or the spleen.[1] On the other hand, any Englishman with pretensions to birth or ability was sure of a warm welcome in the salons of Paris. The once barbarous manners and rude taste of the uncouth islanders were in process of being mollified and corrected. Englishmen were fain to admit that Shakespeare, though he must be allowed to have many "wild" and untutored beauties, was sometimes vulgar, and often wanting in obedience to the inexorable rules of art. The growth of what we now consider a sounder

[1] Writing of the seventh decade of the century, Gibbon says, "Our opinions, our fashions, even our games, were adopted in France, a ray of national glory illuminated each individual, and every Englishman was supposed to be born a patriot and a philosopher."—*Autob.*, ed. Hill, 1900, p. 151.

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judgment was systematically ridiculed even by so exquisite and accomplished a writer as Goldsmith.

It is possible, however, to exaggerate the closeness of the literary relations which subsisted between England and France.[1] In fiction, for example, Fielding was a "barren rascal" in so far as influence upon our neighbours was concerned. Yet he had drawn his inspiration more directly from Lesage than from any other writer, not excepting Cervantes, and he is beyond question the most important among the English novelists, at least from an insular point of view. In philosophy several essential elements in English thought were either ignored or dismissed with the most contemptuous notice by French writers. Hume, it is true, was nominally recognised as a great thinker; but while the French were conversant with the names of the Tindals and the Tolands, of the Collinses and the Chubbs, and even, it might almost be said, of the Whistons and the Dittons, they would seem to have been strangers to the speculations of Butler. Berkeley, indeed, had been heard of. At least one of his works had been translated into French by the Abbé Gua de Malves, and Turgot as a young man refuted him in a couple of letters. But if Voltaire refers to him in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, *s.v.* "Corps," it is merely to warn the reader against the prelate's "cent sophismes captieux"; while, if Diderot

[1] On this topic the most elaborate work is Texte, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire*, 1895. We may be unable to agree with all the author's conclusions; but it is impossible not to admire his industry and his wide knowledge of the subject.

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owns in his *Lettre sur les Aveugles* that Berkeley's system of idealism is difficult to disprove, he explains that that is only because it is so absurd. The truth is that philosophical inquiry in France and in England pursued a different course. Here, thought was at least as searching and profound; but the stability of the social edifice was never shaken. There, the efforts of all sorts and schools of writers—of the disciples of Rousseau as well as of the disciples of Voltaire—co-operated, with a harmony not the less complete that it was not preconcerted, towards one great end—the catastrophe of 1789. It may be desirable, therefore, to glance at the respective social conditions of the two countries, and at the manner in which these affected the men of letters and their work.

Social conditions in England.

In England the governing class continued to perform its function of government. The better educated members of the Court, or town, section of that class occasionally dabbled in literature themselves, besides taking an interest in the productions of less fortunate persons. But Chesterfield, its typical representative, was one of the first statesmen of his time; and even Horace Walpole, a thorough dilettante at heart, never wholly lost touch with politics. "We men of business," says Mr Lofty, in the play, "despise the moderns; and as for the ancients, we have no time to read them. Poetry is a pretty thing enough for our wives and daughters, but not for us." At all events, "we men of business" had matters of more urgent and practical importance to occupy our thoughts than the foundations of conduct,

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of the State, or of the universe. During the second quarter of the century, it is true, society had a leaning towards free thought clothed in free speech, and was fond of discussing the "problems" of religion. Butler warned the clergy of his diocese against taking part in controversies of this description in general company. The signal victory of orthodoxy over deism may have helped to bring about a change, or the recrudescence of piety may have suggested that such encounters are apt to be neither profitable nor amusing. In any case, the fashion passed off, and ten or twenty years after the Bishop of Durham's *Charge* conversation seems to have turned much less frequently on the evidences of Christianity than upon the last noble lady who had eloped with her footman. At no point in the eighteenth century was English society too fastidious in taste or too elevated in tone. But even when the code of good manners was least stringent, and the licence accorded to speech most generous, it may be doubted whether such *cochonneries* as passed for pleasant wit in the "coterie Holbachique" would have been tolerated in London.

If the town party had other things to mind than chatter about the First Cause, the members of the country party were busily engaged in the administration of local affairs and the dispensation of everyday justice. The more or less punctual discharge of those duties, combined with the enthusiastic pursuit of field sports, occupied the chief of their time at home; and, when they visited London, they found more congenial and stimulating entertainment in gaming, drinking,

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and the other pleasures of the town than in the most abstruse metaphysical speculation. No class in the community has been the cause of so much wit in others, or has been so often pilloried as an example of selfishness and stupidity. That it was to a large extent ignorant, illiterate, dead to æsthetic impressions, and impervious to literature, may very readily be granted. Yet its inability to comprehend, much more to refute, the arguments of Hume was more than outweighed by a complement of eminently practical qualities. As it grew in refinement and knowledge, it lost little or nothing of that fundamentally sound, though often dumb and unconscious, instinct for affairs which, since the accession of Louis XIV., its counterpart in France had been steadily losing. Thus both the town and the country party, though little love was lost between them, were at one in never letting go their grasp of actuality, and in a profound indifference to the march of intellectual "progress." What clinched the matter was the character of the monarchs who successively occupied our throne. Neither of the first two Georges was possessed of a strong literary or artistic turn; and George III. merely combined in himself all the best qualities typical of the country gentleman contemporary with his accession. England has once been cursed with a philosopher for a king; but she has never been afflicted with a king who played at being a philosopher.

The lower classes in England, though their condition now strikes us as having been truly deplorable, were nevertheless, if other countries be brought into com-

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parison, either too prosperous or too deeply absorbed in beer to have time for the ventilation of their grievances. As for the middle-classes, they were much too busy and well-off to indulge in theories or ideals of society. They enjoyed a reasonable share of political power, and as much liberty as they desired to follow their respective callings; and while they were not altogether free from those pretensions to gentility which have always been their weak point, they were too sensible to turn from making money to making constitutions because they never dined with a lord. Social jealousy gained in strength later on when the Nabob became a prominent figure in English life. By that time, however, it was obvious to the most aspiring of parvenus that while he was attacking the aristocracy, some one else would be attacking him. In the middle of the century it seems clear that the company of the great was much more difficult of access in England than in France. The son of an attorney, or of a provincial cutler or watchmaker, would have had ample time to cool his heels in the great man's ante-chamber. The mere reputation of wit or ability would not have procured him a seat at the great man's board, or an invitation to his lady's card-table.[1] On the other hand, perseverance and success in certain well-recognised departments of activity would not merely win for him

The English middle-class.

[1] "You know in England we read their works, but seldom or never take any notice of authors."—Horace Walpole, *Letters*, v. 26. There are some excellent observations on the English aristocracy of the eighteenth century in Bagehot's *Literary Studies*, ed. 1895, vol. ii., art. "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu."

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those unsubstantial though coveted favours, but would actually raise him to an equality with the great man himself. The church and the bar were the two avenues to greatness; and the middle-class tradesman knew that if he bred his clever son to either profession, he put him in the way of gaining not only a competency or even a fortune, but also a seat in parliament or a post in the administration. Such eminence could best be reached by "strict attention to business"; certainly not by the waste of precious time in making game of the Bible, or in probing the sores of civilisation.

The literary calling.

The external circumstances of the literary vocation were never perhaps so depressing as in the middle of the eighteenth century. The golden age when merit was rewarded with good places and fat pensions had passed away. The patron as an institution was rapidly decaying, and the public had not yet stepped in to take his place. But what was the author's loss was the nation's gain. When every man was fighting for his own hand, there could be little "solidarity" among men of letters. Above all, there could be no compact and almost disciplined caste of men animated by a common aim, and pledged alike by community of sentiment and *esprit de corps* to an assault upon the moral and religious code of the country. It is true that Voltaire would have shrunk with as much horror as Hume from any root-and-branch reconstruction of the social fabric. But the English writers seem to have been more quick than the French in descrying the consequences to which the doctrines of some of the Encyclopædists might

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lead. They suspected that, if the process of "smashing" were once fairly started, other things might be swept away besides *l'infâme*. Those who had patrons saw little to be gained by subverting the reigning order. Those who had none could find no public prepared to listen to the doctrines of anarchy. Hume and Adam Smith undoubtedly perceived glaring defects in the political and social arrangements of Great Britain. But neither would have dreamt of initiating a systematic propaganda of reform, still less of revolution.

Social conditions in France.

The state of matters in France was very different. There the government — if government it may be called—was in the hands of a portion of the aristocracy which for the most part gave no heed to affairs beyond seeing to the regular payment of its own salaries and pensions. A swarm of hangers-on infested the Court, the economy of which was conceived on the highest scale of luxury and extravagance. Every courtier sought to emulate the prodigality of his sovereign, and every lackey the prodigality of his master. The upper and wealthier ranks of the clergy had no duties to perform, or, if they had any, never performed them. According to a famous remark of Talleyrand's, "Qui n'a pas vécu avant 1789 ne connaît pas la douceur de vivre." From the point of view of the rich, and those admitted to their company, the observation was emphatically correct. Social intercourse was the supreme object of existence, and in some respects it had been brought to a higher degree of perfection than in any other age or country. The State and its business sank into insigni-

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ficance beside the salon and its pleasures. The duties of husband and wife, of parent and child, were sacrificed to the primary necessity of being witty and agreeable.

The Salons.

Talk was the chief end for which the world existed. Every salon aspired to be a "bureau d'esprit." No subject was reserved from discussion out of regard for either reverence or decency. The door was shut upon nobody who could contribute to the general entertainment. Every one was welcome, irrespective of his origin, rank, or character, who conversed with elegance and spirit. To be a bore was the fatal obstacle to participation in the game;[1] and to be serious was to be a bore. A section of the Court, indeed, might hold itself aloof from the miscellaneous gatherings of the wits; and some hostesses might entertain the *beaux esprits* on one night of the week and the more exclusive members of the aristocracy on another. But the men of letters were nevertheless brought into pretty close contact with the more powerful and exalted classes, whom they met on equal terms, and whom they had little difficulty in imbuing with proper notions as to the absurdity of religion and morals, if not as to the insignificance of rank.

Of the brilliant women[2] who formed the connect-

[1] "Aujourd'hui dans le monde on ne connaît qu'un crime, C'est l'ennui."—*Le Méchant*, act iv. sc. 7.

[2] See, on this subject, E. and J. de Goncourt, *La Femme au xviiime siècle*, 1887; Sainte-Beuve's essays on the various hostesses in the *Causeries du Lundi;* Tallentyre, *The Women of the Salons*, 1901; and *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xv. p. 459, and vol. xvii. p. 290, the former a particularly good article, laying great stress on the bad effect on French society of the men having no politics to attend to.

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ing link in this chain of communication many have bequeathed their memoirs and correspondence to posterity. We have thus ample materials for judging themselves and the society of which they were the centre. Here it is impossible to do more than briefly indicate a few of the prominent names in a distinguished line of succession. The most illustrious in position, if not in ability, was the Duchesse du Maine, in whose *château* at Sceaux Voltaire found a convenient and delightful asylum. Before the middle of the century the salons of Mme. de Staal, Mme. de Lambert, and Mme. de Tencin, were among the most celebrated and popular. After that point, Mme. Geoffrin—the friend of Holbach, Helvetius, Galiani, and Stanislaus Poniatowski, and the first woman of the middle class to embark upon this form of enterprise with success—reigned supreme until 1776, though her pre-eminence was challenged for a time by Mme. d'Épinay, the wife of a farmer-general, the mistress of Grimm, and the benefactress of Rousseau. Mme. Geoffrin's most formidable rival, however, was Mme. du Deffand, the friend of Horace Walpole. Unquestionably the wittiest, though not the most popular, of all who ever kept salon, she laughed impartially at bigot and sceptic, refused to take philosophers and Encyclopædists at their own high valuation, found their extreme arrogance the reverse of entertaining, and confessed to a preference for the gentlemen who frequented her house before the pamphleteers. Last of all must be mentioned Mlle. de L'Espinasse, the particular friend of D'Alembert. Though not, in the eyes of some, the least attract-

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ive figure in the group, she had much in her of the pedant and the sophist; and, albeit the sketch of her in Diderot's *Rêve de D'Alembert* is a gross caricature, she was well entitled to be called the priestess of "la philosophie militante." There is no more curious band in all literary history than these ladies. England produced no one exactly like them. The bluestockings who revered and copied Dr Johnson were their inferiors in everything, except virtue. The most influential salon that ever flourished in London—that of Lady Holland in a later generation—was feeble compared with any of theirs. If there be one more vital difference than another between the France and the England of our period, it is that presented by the position of the female sex in the two countries. In France, women exercised a profound influence on society, and through society on literature. In England, women, as well as authors, were severely kept in what was then considered to be their proper place.

Feminine influence.

Critics have remarked that up to a certain point the influence of women upon French literature was wholly beneficial. It refined the common vocabulary, so that the language of letters became identical with that of "la bonne compagnie." It encouraged clearness and precision of expression; it fostered wit and lightness of touch; it counteracted any tendency to pedantry or dulness.[1] But in

[1] "Celui qui ne veut écrire qu'avec précision, énergie, et vigueur, peut ne vivre qu'avec des hommes; mais celui qui veut, dans son style, avoir de la souplesse, de l'aménité, du liant, et ce je ne sais quoi qu'on appelle du charme, fera très-bien, je crois, de vivre avec des femmes."—Marmontel, *Mémoires* in Barrière's Collection, 1891, p. 312.

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weightier matters, it may be questioned if the feminine influence was altogether salutary. There can be little doubt that it was mainly responsible for the levity of tone and superficiality of treatment which are among the most glaring vices of much of the writing of the time. Men of letters acquired in the salons a habit of mind which they had difficulty in shaking off, and thus they adapted their mode of treatment and their reasoning to the taste of the fashionable persons—"les honnêtes gens"—who were accustomed to assemble in some lively hostess's drawing-room. It is said that authors of the first rank were by no means assiduous attendants at the salons, which were chiefly frequented by writers of an inferior order. But the flavour and atmosphere of the salon are perceptible in the work of the very greatest, even in that of Montesquieu himself. Perhaps the most important effect of the institution upon the literary class was the growth of a strong unity of feeling and purpose. The foundations of that unity were securely laid by D'Alembert's *Essai sur les Gens de Lettres;* the appearance of the Encyclopædia materially strengthened it; and the capture of the Academy by the "philosophes" after 1760 cemented it more closely than ever. Rousseau, indeed, deliberately turned his back upon the salons and his brethren. Fréron, too, and Palissot, who both counted for something, certainly caused their opponents a great deal of annoyance and vexation. But the great majority of the literary class were in the one camp; and while their concord and fellowship

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were doubtless due in the first instance to common antipathies of no ordinary strength, they were sensibly promoted by the regular intercourse and the commerce of ideas which the salons rendered at once easy and agreeable.

The French middle-class.

The ranks of the men who wrote were principally recruited from a middle or lower-middle class which, growing daily more wealthy and prosperous, found itself effectually debarred from a share of political power. Its jealousy of the ruling caste was intensified by a multitude of petty grievances, none the less galling that they touched the dignity even more than the pocket of the victim. The farmer-general, to whom alone of the middle classes was entrusted an administrative duty of great responsibility, was contemned and disliked in spite of his riches. The philosopher who associated in somebody's drawing-room on an apparently equal footing with the noble *abbé* whose brother possessed the ear of the king, was aware that, though a pension might be within his grasp, the position of one who governs the country was unattainable by him or by his brother, the pushing notary of the provincial town. *Abbés* might echo the most advanced views of doctrine, and put into practice the most modern principles of conduct; but philosophers and their kinsmen were kept out of their own. Failing more practical remedies for so scandalous a state of things, the only hope lay in devising a new constitution. The abstract methods of the mathematics had achieved wonders in the field of science.

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Why should they be less potent in the field of human affairs? This disposition to apply rigid canons and formulæ to practical matters was greatly assisted by the Academies in the provinces. It is impossible in England to conceive of debating societies having much power for good or for evil. It was otherwise in France. That the prevalent propensity to discussion would ever spread downwards to the mechanics and peasants never occurred to those who first indulged it. Their aims were confined exclusively to their own elevation. But from the moment controversy descended from the salon into the street, the existing order of society was doomed. It is dangerous to let loose the most sweeping revolutionary propositions upon a community where the burden of each individual's taxation is in inverse ratio to his ability to bear it.

Voltaire.

From this French middle-class sprang Voltaire, the most illustrious man of letters and the truest representative of the national genius whom the age produced. François-Marie Arouet[1] (1694–1778) was the son of a notary, whom he disappointed by deserting the law for literature. That young Arouet had an unusually good capacity for

[1] Morley, *Voltaire*, 1874; Hamley, *Voltaire* (Foreign Classics), 1877; Bengesco, *Bibliographie*, 4 vols., 1882-1890; Desnoireterres, *Voltaire et la Société Française au xviii^me siècle*, 8 vols., 1871-1876. *Œuvres*, ed. Beuchot, 70 vols., 1828 *et seq.*; ed. Moland, 52 vols., 1877-1883. The *Œuvres*, ed. Furne-Didot, 13 vols., 1835-1838, and since reprinted, occupy much less space. His most important works are readily accessible. There is a convenient selection of the *Romans*, 1 vol., and the *Contes*, &c., 1 vol. (Firmin-Didot).

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business was amply demonstrated in his after-life. At the outset, however, his efforts were devoted to entering polite society. The friendship of the venerable courtesan, Ninon de l'Enclos, enabled him to gratify his predilection for the great; and the taste grew by what it fed on, in spite of one or two untoward incidents that had blunted the edge of any appetite less sharply set. His powers of flattery were no less remarkable than his gift of scorn, and he used them freely when it suited him to do so. He was never really happy when sequestered from the genial rays of a monarch's smile. If he could not win the favour of Louis XV., on whom he lavished encomiums, he must seek that of a foreign potentate. There is no more amusing episode in the lives of the philosophers than the story of Voltaire's relations with that eminent "vainqueur des préjugés," Frederick the Great. In later life, he extolled the King of Poland and Catherine of Russia, to whom he dedicated his *Philosophie de l'histoire* (1765), for their services in raising down-trodden humanity, and in establishing liberty of conscience. Failing the rose, what was near the rose made a good substitute. If any one person united in himself all the vices which rendered a large portion of the French nobility detestable, it was the Duc de Richelieu; and the Duke was one of Voltaire's heroes. It seems unnecessary to discuss the interesting theory that this trait in Voltaire sprang from a laudable desire to keep in touch with the men who ruled the destinies of the world. Perhaps its most unpleasant manifestation was the tendency to

His love of the great.

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taunt any rival whose father happened to be beneath the rank of a notary, with his low birth and vulgar breeding.

Voltaire was, not merely a good hater, but, a vindictive and relentless enemy. He was a living illustration of his own remark that to contradict a professing *savant* is to draw upon oneself a torrent of abuse; and his observation that Maupertuis, one of his pet aversions, never forgave people who were not of his own way of thinking, was equally true of himself. In the case of Montesquieu, the two Rousseaus, and Buffon, pure jealousy accounted for his hostility. But even where such a powerful incentive could not come into play, he exhibited a rancour and exuded a venom which, while they add zest to his writings, detract from what may be called his intellectual character. The prophet Habakkuk is assailed with an acrimony scarcely less passionate than M. de Brosses, and Hosea overwhelmed with a scorn scarcely less insolent than M. de Pompignan. He never attempted to conceal his animosity against "those ferocious animals" the Jews; though whether he owed this feeling to the perusal of Scripture or to his experience in the world of finance, is uncertain. What is practically beyond doubt is that the first sprightly runnings of anti-Semitic doctrine issued from the Voltairean fountainhead and no other.

His vindictiveness.

The characteristics which we have noted are strictly relevant to a consideration of Voltaire's writings. Philosophers like Hume or Butler have succeeded in expressing their thoughts in a comparatively dis-

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passionate manner. Calmness, reticence, and self-control are cardinal features of their style. Plato, again, though no one could accuse his dialogues of being colourless, never seems to obtrude upon the reader his personal preferences, or to be paying off old scores. But Voltaire cannot keep his likes and dislikes, his rights and wrongs, in the background. Every page thrills with his overmastering idiosyncrasy. His views are precious because they have become part and parcel of his own being. To call them in question is to offer a deliberate insult to himself; and such presumption must be at once chastised. Hence no sense of self-respect or dignity restrained him from throwing mud at any adversary. Hence *L'Écossaise* (1760); hence the *Anecdotes sur Fréron* (1761). Thus we may say of him, what his preposterous Huron says of Malebranche, that he seems to have written the one half of his books with his reason and the other with his imagination and his prejudices. Yet "prejudice" was by way of being the bugbear of all the philosophers, French or English, who believed that they lived in "le siècle des lumières," "the age of reason." How deeply the catchword had struck root may be judged by Voltaire's jesting promise in his delightful *Testament* (1769). When I cross the Styx, says he—

"S'ils ont de préjugés, j'en guérirai les ombres."

Before his sojourn in England (1726-1729), Voltaire had clearly indicated his attitude towards the dominant creed of France in the *Épître à Uranie* (*circ.* 1722).

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Voltaire and the Church.

The seeds of scepticism, which Bayle was doubtless the first to implant in him, were well watered in this country. He became familiar with religious controversy, and his experience of speech free to the point of licence in practice, if not in theory, was little likely to reconcile him to the state of matters in his native land, than which nothing could be more nicely calculated to disgust a vigorous and candid intellect. The Roman Church was no longer recommended by mental or moral superiority. Yet she retained in her hands, and from time to time put into force, a power of persecution none the less odious that its exercise was fitful and capricious. The hideous barbarities perpetrated at the Church's instigation in the cases of Calas and La Barre testify to the spirit which animated too many ecclesiastics, as well as to that want of a strong central government which was the curse of pre-revolution France. Voltaire wrote and worked hard to redress the wrong done in these and similar judicial proceedings. We may suspect from his correspondence that the thought most present to his mind was, *jam proximus ardet;* the fear that his turn would come next. We may infer from his having procured the confinement of Poisson, and from his desire to have Fréron and La Beaumelle laid by the heels, that the liberty of conscience which he passionately advocated was merely of the sort to which every man is secretly attached — the liberty to think and utter his own thoughts. But we cannot deny that he did much to undermine a tyranny

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which had not yet become too much of a mockery to be formidable to the poor and friendless. Voltaire, for his own part, resorted to innumerable devices to conceal the authorship of his innumerable works. No one believed his disclaimers; every one penetrated his disguises. It would have been possible to feel more respect for the predominant faction in the French Church if, instead of driving helpless wretches to the gallows or the wheel for heresy, it had been bold enough to bring to account the wealthy and powerful Voltaire.

But a careless student might well be forgiven for supposing that Voltaire's quarrel was, not with the religious establishment in France, but, with religion in any shape whatever. He hated Jansenist as much as Jesuit. While he rejoiced in the suppression of the latter order, he dreaded lest the country, cleared of the foxes, should become the prey of the wolves. He has stated the case—or one branch of the case—against monasticism with great force. But in his attack upon asceticism he lets us see that, in his eyes, as in those of the whole philosophic party, self-restraint and chastity were the most detestable of qualities. And so, in his historical writings, the crimes and blunders that disfigure the story of the past are attributed, wherever possible, to the sentiment of religion. He takes up the strain of Lucretius. It is with religion, he once roundly avers, as with gaming, "On commence par être dupe, on finit par être fripon."

The risk of confounding the essence with the ac-

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cidents of religion was aggravated by the circumstance that ridicule, as he well knew, was the most formidable weapon in Voltaire's armoury. To present any one in an exquisitely ludicrous light was an easy matter to a man of his cast of genius. This method of treatment has the great advantage of being equally applicable to the history of Jews and of Gentiles. In *La Pucelle* (1755) the national heroine of France came off no better than if she had been David or Joab. But there is a special relish attaching to this mode of handling narratives invested in the estimation of many with a peculiar sanctity; and Voltaire's sallies against the sacred books of the Hebrews are incomparable of their kind. True, he is a little apt to repeat himself, nor is the author of *Les Oreilles du Comte de Chesterfield* (1775) quite convincing when he protests in horror against the gross indelicacy of Ezekiel and the minor prophets. Yet all his squibs are packed with a pungent and alert wit in strong contrast to the clumsy work of a Tom Paine. In effect, Voltaire was a passed master in profanity, theoretical and practical: "sportiveness" the wise it call. His *chef-d'œuvre* in blasphemy is the *Saul* (1763). Excessively diverting, it lies open to the remark that it must needs be involved in the destruction of what it attacks. When every one has ceased to believe that the Bible is, in some special sense or other, a revelation of the Deity, *Saul* and all its kindred will merely be noteworthy as proofs of Voltaire's lack of historical imagination.

His gift of ridicule.

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His own beliefs.

It is less difficult to say what religious opinions Voltaire objected to in other people, than to determine the complexion of those which he held himself. He returned from England fresh from the influence of Deism, which, in some of its varieties, left room for the belief in a vague and emasculated providence. If this ever formed part of Voltaire's creed, it received a staggering blow from the earthquake at Lisbon in 1755. His poem on that disaster directly challenged the view that "God's in His heaven, All's right with the world." The remonstrance addressed by Rousseau to the author had the effect of most remonstrances, and *Candide* appeared in 1759. After 1760 Voltaire's activity in the anti-religious propaganda redoubled. Rousseau's *Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard*, published in *Émile* (1762), produced counterblasts in which the residuum of deism in Voltaire's creed was attenuated to vanishing point. His scepticism reaches its acme in the *Sermon des cinquante* (1762), and the *Extrait des sentiments de Jean Meslier* (1762); while the *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764), in seven volumes, gives a detailed exposition of the gospel according to reason. One must suppose the Patriarch to have been well aware that his attack was delivered against a more numerous army of antagonists than the orthodox Romans. To no class of opinions could it have been more fatal than to those of the sentimental deists. It is the more curious that in *L'histoire de Jenni* (1775) he should have set himself to echo, apparently in good faith, their most ancient platitudes. Lord

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Baltimore's *protégé* points to heaven and exclaims, "Mon dieu est là"; claps his hand upon his heart and murmurs, "ma loi est dedans." M. Freind is a sort of deistical Mr Barlow. He employs the argument from design, and attributes the ills of life chiefly to man's own fault, not to that of the "grand fabricateur." The mystery of providence is solved by the magic phrase, "general laws." The Creator would stultify Himself by interfering with individuals in this world, but it is essential to His dignity to reward or punish them in the next. Whoever disbelieves that is an atheist, and any atheist who is poor and is certain of not being found out is a fool if he does not murder you for your money. Here, perhaps, is the fundamental explanation of Voltaire's deism. He conceived a belief in God, and in heaven and hell as a corollary, to be an indispensable cement in the edifice of society. He was never a friend to talking atheism before the servants; for it is among the lower classes, *bien entendu*, that the existence of the belief in a God is all-important. This conception of the true function of religion is probably not a strong missionary force, but the fact that Voltaire forgot how he had demolished it by implication a hundred times, shows the tenacity with which he clung to it.

His standard of credibility.

To discuss Voltaire's speculations about religion upon their merits is outside the province of the present volume. But we may remark that he seems unconsciously to have evolved for himself a purely personal standard of credibility.

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He not only disbelieved many stories told in sacred and profane history, but he also disbelieved any facts of science which seemed to him *a priori* incredible. Thus he rejected as absurd the notion that the sea could have played an important part in the formation of the dry land. As for shells being found among the Alps, the very idea was preposterous; unless the shells had been dropped there by passing pilgrims. Geology, in short, was little better than alchemy. The reader will find this raillery directed to the address of Buffon, in that excellent piece, *L'homme aux quarante Écus* (1768); and he will please to recollect that it comes from the pen of one whose idols were Locke and Newton, and who, thirty years before, had presented the French public with the *Éléments* of the philosophy of the latter. The good side of this characteristic in Voltaire was that he was no system-monger, and, indeed, nourished a strong distrust of all ambitious proposals for the instant regeneration of the species. He could not tolerate "les Solons et les Lycurgues modernes," or even the "nouveaux Triptolèmes," with their projects for the revolution of agriculture. His mind had a strictly prosaic bias. The reforms he advocated were well within the sphere of practical politics. Fresh air and exercise were his favourite specifics for everybody. He was a keen champion of inoculation for the small-pox, and a bitter opponent of intra-mural burial. These, perhaps, are the politics of the vestry, but the ideals adumbrated in the *Éloge historique de la Raison* (1774) show, as M. Faguet has

His practical turn.

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pointed out, that his sound common-sense was capable of grappling with higher matters. Progress for him meant neither anarchy nor a return to the backwoods. We are all servants of the State, he declares; we are in the pay of society, and we turn deserters when we abandon it. He was equally emphatic in insisting that in a nation there must be one supreme power, and that the civil as opposed to the ecclesiastical, the temporal as opposed to the spiritual.

His energy.

Voltaire was never idle. Besides composing what was designed for immediate publication, he conducted a voluminous correspondence, managed a considerable estate, and nursed a large fortune. Towards the end his genius was more prolific than ever. Neither his letters nor his published works show any sign of exhaustion. He continued to work at high pressure, and the gauge always registered, so to speak, a full head of steam. The veteran of eighty took the same eager interest in literature and in life as the youth who had expiated his first literary indiscretion by a visit to the Bastille nearly sixty years before; and the final departure of the Patriarch may be said to have taken place in a perfect blaze of glory.

His style.

His style is exquisitely clear, without a hint of effort. If any process of filtering was required, it was carried out in secret. No doubt, this matchless lucidity had to be paid for. Voltaire's mind was logical rather than subtle, acute rather than profound. He loved anything in the shape of a dilemma. "Ou Dieu inspirait Moïse, ou

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ce n'était qu'un charlatan," was his terse verdict on the Pentateuch; and he would have been unable to understand the thousand qualifications and compromises by which the present age would evade the menacing horns. Hence, though he ranges over a vast surface, he never thinks it necessary to probe very far beneath it. His writing has none of the indefinable charm of suggestion. A sentence never conveys more than meets the eye. We catch no echo of old, unhappy, far-off things. Yet it is infinitely better to be shallow and perspicuous than to disguise shallowness in rodomontade or "symbolism." It is no derogation from his praise that the virtue in which Voltaire excelled seems to be inextricably bound up with the genius of the French language. Even writers of the third and fourth rank in France possess the enviable faculty of lucid exposition. A Frenchman to be obscure must take some pains; and it is only by dint of unremitting perseverance that he can hope to become absolutely unintelligible.

Without attempting any new, or repeating any old, definition of wit as distinct from humour, it may perhaps be said that Voltaire's writings afford a typical illustration of the former quality in its purest manifestation. His gift in this respect was so abundant in quantity, so distinguished in quality, and so predominant over his other talents, as to make it appear (in the language of a classical anecdote) little less than "devilish." The only satisfaction which the victims of his talent enjoyed lay in the knowledge that he himself had an even thinner skin than usually falls to the

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lot of people with a marked propensity to jest at the expense of others. For the rest, the strains which can be discovered in his literary pedigree do not account for the whole Voltaire. His scepticism, his manner of handling historical legend, his occasional brutality, and his tendency to lapse into the nasty, all derive from Bayle. He owed something to Lucian, and something more to Rabelais—notably a hatred of asceticism and the love of liberty to follow his own bent. His resemblance to Swift, so obvious at first sight, is essentially superficial. For Swift, indeed, he entertained a proper respect, and his criticism of the Dean is comparatively judicious and sympathetic. But the spirit which breathes through the work of the two men is radically different. Voltaire, for one thing, was a success. He had hit the gold; he was the most interesting and picturesque figure in Europe. Swift, on the other hand, was in his own estimation a failure. Since 1714 he had been a baffled and disappointed man. The cup of political power had been dashed from his lips for ever. Even the road to preferment in the Church was hopelessly blocked. That he and Voltaire alike acknowledged no bounds of propriety or mercy when an enemy was to be attacked, is nothing more than the truth. But in a more general question with humanity or the universe, there is no possible comparison between them; for Voltaire had nothing of that appalling sense of the insignificance and pettiness of man which looms darkly in the background of all Swift's writings and informs them with an awful unity of purpose.

His literary ancestry.

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His literary descendants.

What Voltaire, then, drew from his predecessors or his elders was as nothing in comparison of what he himself brought to entertain the world. His spirit has entered into and become an integral part of European thought, yet his direct literary progeny is not numerous. Though he has taught a multitude to mock, few of his pupils have acquired the master's touch. But in the Byron of *Don Juan* we hear the echo of the Voltairean laugh; nor is the source of Heine's inspiration far to seek. As for the indescribable tone of persiflage, the lightness yet certainty of hand, and the scent for human foibles —these have never since been approached save in the works, minor as well as major, of the younger Disraeli.

In determining the comparative merits of Voltaire's prose writings, there is little room for serious difference of opinion. No one would probably maintain that the *Lettres sur les Anglais*, or *Lettres philosophiques* (1734), are equal to the works of his later years. His touch is, of course, unmistakable (though he disavowed the work in order to ensure his admission to the Academy in 1746); the wit is sparkling; and, if the author borrowed something from the *Lettres Persanes*, he laid it out at good interest. Yet it must yield in delicacy of handling and perfection of finish to subsequent pieces, such, for instance, as the *Défense de mon Oncle* (1767), which is conceived in his most amusing vein. A high place, again, must be awarded to many of the tracts and pamphlets in which he avenged him of his enemies. Among these

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may be mentioned the *Diatribe du Docteur Akakia* (1752), aimed at Maupertuis, *Les Quands* (1760), aimed at Le Franc de Pompignan, and *Le Sentiment des Citoyens* (1764), aimed at Jean-Jacques: this last a very triumph of scurrility. However discreditable such performances may be to Voltaire as a man, they are admirable illustrations of what may be achieved by the combination of brilliant wit with implacable animosity.

The "contes philosophiques" and Candide.

But most competent judges are agreed that among all his writings, whether poetry or prose, whether history or philosophy, whether narrative or drama, the palm must be awarded to the class called, for want of a better name, the "contes philosophiques." The *genre* was of his own inventing, and he kept the secret well, though Marmontel, for one, brought off some more than tolerable imitations. *Zadig* (1747), *Micromégas* (1752), *Le monde comme il va* (1748), *Le taureau blanc* (1774), *La princesse de Babylone* (1768), *L'homme aux quarante Écus* (1768) — these represent the living Voltaire. Above all, there is his masterpiece, *Candide*, an epitome of his choicest excellences. These tales, allegories, parables, apologues—call them what you will — transport us, as it were, into the atmosphere of Galland's *Arabian Nights*, highly rarefied, and impregnated with a delicate aroma of extravaganza. The vague and mysterious splendour of foreign lands forms a happy setting for characters who do not profess to be like ordinary human beings except in their failings, and whose actions do not pretend to

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be regulated by normal principles. The far-fetched coincidences of romance are burlesqued with a master-hand, and every line gleams with a polished and searching wit. All these stories were written for a purpose. But Voltaire never commits the blunder of being too much in earnest, except in *L'Ingénu* (1767), where the spell of illusion is partially dissolved by the introduction of something too closely resembling real life, and the death of "la belle Saint-Yves" affects us no more than any other piece of sham pathos. Such consummate works of art are of too fragile a texture for the clumsy process of analysis. It is enough to admire their perfect adjustment and proportion, their consummate reticence and repose. The note is never forced, the jest never spun out. To compare the employment of a catch-phrase in Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* with the employment of Dr Pangloss's is to realise by how much the craftsman is separated from the true artist. Nothing in *Candide* or its companions is overdone or extravagant, nothing is "out of the picture." And so we part from Voltaire, his wise maxim, so well suited to an age of intellectual doubt and distraction, ringing in our ears, "Il faut cultiver notre jardin."

Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu (1689-1755),[1] to whom in the more

[1] Sorel, *Montesquieu* (Grands Écrivains Fr.), 1887; Brunetière, *Études critiques*, ser. 4, and *Questions de Critique*, 1889; Faguet, *Dix-huitième siècle;* Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, t. vii. Many editions of Montesquieu's works have been published, the best, perhaps, being that of Laboulaye, 1875-79.

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serious walks of literature Voltaire must yield place, was a country gentleman of a noble house, who faithfully performed the duties of his station. The air of the Court disagreed with him, and he was not in the "inner ring" of the nobility. But he had a strong taste for the life of Paris, and whenever he visited the capital was a regular frequenter of the salons. He was on friendly terms with all the men of letters except Voltaire, on whom, to be sure, he had inflicted two intolerable wrongs: he was well born, and he had acquired a great reputation. He held himself aloof from all coteries, kept his head cool, and chose to be one of the audience rather than an actor in the "movement."

Montesquieu.

In his early years he mingled in the brilliant but dissolute society of the Regency; and its levity of tone is apparent in the *Lettres Persanes* (1721), which, published anonymously, took the town by storm. The oriental trappings and accessories are, of course, pure Galland; but whencesoever Montesquieu obtained the idea of criticising the institutions of his country through the medium of an imaginary foreigner, he set a fashion which, though sadly threadbare, is not even yet wholly discarded. Of all the imitations, the *Citizen of the World* alone deserves to be named in the same breath with its original. The *Lettres* have worn well, and are still delightful reading. To remark that Montesquieu makes great play with the harem and its guardians is to say that he belonged to his age and country. But the somewhat obvious humours of the seraglio do not

The Lettres Persanes.

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detract much from the merit of the book. It abounds with humour of a cynical but pleasant flavour; and it is marked, like all Montesquieu's writings, by good sense and good temper. The Président, it may be, was not wholly free from what his Persian traveller calls "la fureur de la plupart des Français," to wit, "de l'avoir de l'esprit." His jesting may occasionally seem unseasonable. But he practically exhausted this vein of ill-timed flippancy in his *Temple de Gnide* (1725); while it is only fair to note that in the *Lettres* themselves, in addition to the spirited banter of contemporary failings, there is a valuable deposit of shrewd observation and statesmanlike sagacity. It might be rash to say with M. Taine that they contain in embryo all the important ideas of the age.

In 1734, Montesquieu, who had been chosen a member of the Academy in 1728, published his *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence;* to which was subsequently added the *Dialogue de Sylla et d'Eucrate* (1745). The *De l'esprit des Lois* appeared in 1748, and was followed two years later by a *Défense*, which is an extremely skilful exercise in apologetic. This virtually completes the tale of his writings, for we leave out of account his correspondence, together with such miscellanies and fragments as the piety of his representatives has disinterred from notebooks. These, however interesting, are of no substantive value. His fame rests chiefly upon the *Esprit des Lois*, which is justly regarded as, so to speak, the *Principia* of modern political science. On its first appearance,

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the connoisseurs were not quite unanimous in applause. Some pronounced it unreadable; others thought that to study the laws of savages was to waste time. Mme. du Deffand suggested as a more appropriate title, "*De l'esprit sur les Lois.*" But these were in a minority, and the book may be said to have sprung at once into a position from which it has never since been dislodged.

The Esprit des Lois.

It is not difficult to lay one's finger on the weak spots in the work. The arrangement and division of the subject savour of caprice rather than of design. The reader need only glance casually at its pages to see how the books are split up into irregular chapters, and the chapters into curt paragraphs. If he turns to Book XXV., he will find that a single epigram of less than two lines suffices for the first chapter; and that discovery is not unique in kind. Such a scheme, or want of scheme, besides being ruinous to symmetry, really hinders the reader in his effort to trace the sequence of thought and argument. Again, while Montesquieu's learning was extensive and profound, he was never able to look at classical antiquity with his own eyes. It was natural that in treating of democracy he should chiefly have in view the city-state; for, apart from Switzerland, he would have searched modern history down to his own time in vain for an example of that form of government. Yet one wishes that he had thrown off the yoke of Numa Pompilius and Solon, and renounced allegiance to Lycurgus and Servius Tullius. In England, such names conveyed

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little meaning, and evoked no passions. In France, they possessed deep significance. Plutarch was partly responsible for this; for among the French Plutarch was the most popular of ancient authors. It would be interesting, too, to inquire how far the tradition of classical tragedy helped to keep sweet the memory of such legislators, and to invest their alleged measures with a halo of sanctity. In any event, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Montesquieu's deferential attitude to their authority seemed to lend a sanction to the practice of constitution-mongering, which became more and more rampant as the century approached its close.

Its great merits.

Yet the faults of the book are much more than counterbalanced by its superlative excellences. Montesquieu had travelled over a great part of Europe—πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω—and he had availed himself of the labours of other travellers in remote continents. Catholicity and comprehensiveness are thus among the conspicuous qualities of the work. Montesquieu thought no country, nation, or tribe, too deeply plunged in barbarism to afford him relevant information. His facts, whether derived from his own observation or from that of others, are pertinent, well-chosen, and, in so far as he can be held responsible, well-attested. He was the first inquirer to attach their due importance to physical and economical conditions as factors in the sum of individual or national character, and was well laughed at for a paradox, which has since become a truism. Yet

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he was no upholder of the view that man is destitute of initiative, and is the sport of inexorable causes, themselves the inevitable effect of the particular group of causes which happened to be in operation at the moment when the universe came into being. Such a view he thought equivalent to ousting the conception of law from cosmology. Laws, in his sense, are "the necessary relations which flow from the nature of things"; and the laws appropriate to man, who is an intelligent being, postulate in him intelligence.

He pursues his investigation with admirable temper, seriousness, and judgment. The tendency to be "smart" is kept under restraint, though epigrams will occasionally out. Once or twice he gives the reins to his wit, as in the celebrated chapter (Bk. XV., c. 5) in pretended defence of negro slavery. On the topic of religion he is reticent. But he never treats that theme as of necessity a subject for mockery. He has been reproached with his enthusiastic admiration of the British constitution; and it may be that he did not discover the true secret of its success. But a Frenchman who had spent two years in these islands might be excused for exaggerating the advantages of their polity as compared with that of France. Since the date of Aristotle's *Politics* no work on the subject had appeared comparable to the *Esprit des Lois* in magnitude of conception or thoroughness of execution. Its influence upon subsequent thought has been immeasurable; and Rousseau — so glaring a contrast to Montesquieu in

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temperament and career—has been one of the most potent instruments in its diffusion. In point of style, however, Montesquieu can scarcely be reckoned in the first flight of French prose-writers. His command of language was not commensurate with the magnitude of his theme, and we miss the ease and vivacity of Voltaire. His idiom is less pure than that of the Patriarch, and we are told that he was addicted to Latinisms. A French critic professes to detect in him a slightly provincial note. If the observation be confined to his manner of writing, it is probably well-founded. We know that in speech he retained the accent of Gascony, and the written no less than the spoken word may bear traces of his native province. But if it be intended to apply to his matter, a foreigner may be pardoned for his inability to concur in the judgment.

Buffon.

Montesquieu's aloofness from the wrangling of partisan controversy was shared by Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707-1788),[1] the only writer of the first, or nearly the first, order who can compare with the Président in dignity and character. Buffon's earliest literary performance was a translation (1735) of a treatise on vegetable statics by Dr Stephen Hales; his second, a translation (1740) of Sir Isaac Newton's *Method of Fluxions.* But his

[1] Lebasteur, *Buffon* (Classiques populaires), 1889; Brunetière, *Nouvelles questions de critique*, 1890; Faguet, *Dix-huitième siècle;* Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, t. x. There are several editions of Buffon's great work, the most recent being that of Lanessan, 12 vols., 1884. The *Discours sur le style* has often been reprinted.

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genius, which at first inclined to mathematical studies, was soon diverted into another channel. He was appointed in 1739 to the keepership of the King's garden; and the result was the *Histoire Naturelle*, which was published in thirty-six quarto volumes between 1749 and 1788. The earlier volumes contain his celebrated *Théorie de la terre*, and the *Manière de traiter l'histoire naturelle*. One of the later contains his equally celebrated *Époques de la nature*.

Buffon combined the two essentials which he postulates in the successful student of natural history: "les grandes vues d'un génie ardent qui embrasse tout d'un coup d'œil," and "les petites attentions d'un instinct laborieux qui ne s'attache qu'à un seul point." With regard to the latter, he was exceptionally fortunate in his colleagues, among whom were Daubenton (1716-1799), Montbeillard (1720-1785), Bexon (1748-1784), and Saint-Fond (1741-1819). Without their assistance in details he would have found it impossible to carry out a plan conceived on so generous a scale. For the work deals, not only with natural history in its narrower sense, but also, with plants and minerals, and with questions as to the origin of the world. During many years it held its own, in complete or abridged form, as a standard work. Its facts are accurately observed, and, if the treatment of some of the animals (the swan, for example) is decidedly anthropomorphic, the result was not at the time the less acceptable. It has necessarily to a large extent been superseded by the results of subsequent research. But no amount of fresh information can rob it of

His Histoire Naturelle.

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its candour and fine temper. Voltaire was pleased to sneer at Buffon as a maker of systems; but no charge could be more unjust. Buffon was always on his guard against the persuasiveness of words. The individual alone, as he pointed out, exists in nature. Orders and classes exist only in our imagination, and for our convenience. Hard and fast schemes of classification, he thought, are apt to lead men astray, and learning and ingenuity are often spent in vain upon the compilation of a highly technical vocabulary.

He was completely out of touch with the great body of the *philosophes* in maintaining that man constitutes a class wholly distinct from the remainder of animated nature. But while he believed man to be divided from the brutes by a chasm which had never been bridged, he did not believe that in its primitive state the human species possessed all the virtues. Thus he was at odds with Diderot on the one hand, and with Rousseau on the other. Nor does he differ less markedly from the encyclopædic school in his sense of the vastness and majesty of nature. He was at one with his age in thinking that mystery inspires only disgust in grown-up people, but the eliciting of the secret of the universe did not appear to him to be a process in which "l'esprit" could make amends for the lack of other qualities. His style is admirably suited to his subject. Clear and limpid, it achieves precision without pedantry. Sometimes in dealing with high matters it rises to a measured eloquence which the mathematical D'Alembert thought pompous, but which is characteristic of the man who, Hume tells

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us, resembled a French marshal in appearance rather than a *savant*.

Buffon gave utterance to some of his thoughts upon writing in general in the *Discours sur le style*, which is chiefly remembered for one celebrated apophthegm, "Le style c'est [de] l'homme même." The tract does not pretend to be exhaustive, being indeed merely the address delivered by the author at his reception as a member of the Academy in 1753; but it summarises fairly enough one view of the subject. Style is defined as the order and movement which one puts into one's thoughts. Unity and proportion are the qualities to be most sought after. Nothing is more degrading to a writer than to attempt to express common things in an out-of-the-way manner. There must be no purple patches. Warmth and colour in writing are permissible only when they spring naturally and in the course of composition from perfect mastery of the subject in hand. When we read such warnings against excess or extravagance in writing, we are inclined to echo the words of Voltaire's hero, "Oui; rien de trop; c'est ma situation; mais je n'ai pas assez." In truth, the limitations inherent in Buffon's conception are palpable enough. The strict application of his canons would certainly condemn much of the best English prose, with no compensating advantage save perhaps the explosion of the "prose-poem." But it should not be forgotten that Buffon gave no countenance to the happy-go-lucky theory of writing. The language and style of conversation and

His views on style.

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of written prose, he points out, are quite distinct. However narrow and restricted his theory, he had at least recognised the truth that style, being "l'homme même," is the salt that keeps a work sweet, and that only what is well-written is likely to pass to posterity. It is in virtue of this great saving principle, understood in its most comprehensive sense, and sedulously put into practice, that Buffon will always rank high among French prose-writers.

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CHAPTER II.

THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA AND THE REACTION.

THE "PHILOSOPHES"—DIDEROT—HIS RELIGIOUS VIEWS—HIS MATERIALISM — DIDEROT AS A CASUIST — THE 'NEVEU DE RAMEAU' — THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA—D'ALEMBERT—HELVÉTIUS AND HIS 'DE L'ESPRIT'—HOLBACH AND HIS 'SYSTÈME DE LA NATURE' — GRIMM — CONDILLAC — MARMONTEL — DUCLOS — RAYNAL — J.-J. ROUSSEAU — HIS RELATIONS WITH THE "PHILOSOPHES" — HIS GOSPEL ACCORDING TO NATURE — THE 'CONTRAT SOCIAL' — THE 'LETTRE SUR LES SPECTACLES'—VOLNEY—CONDORCET—VAUVENARGUES.

"SOME of them were estimable men, and a much larger number were ambitious quacks. They declaimed against despotism, and were the pensioners of despots. We owe to them in great measure that species of practical philosophy which, reducing selfishness to a system, regards human society as a war of cunning, success as the standard of what is just and unjust, honesty as a matter of good taste and good manners, and the world as the patrimony of clever scoundrels." Such, in effect, was the judgment pronounced by Robespierre upon the *philosophes*, whom it is now necessary to consider a little more attentively.

The "philosophes."

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In most ages the world has been content to picture the philosopher as a sort of ineffectual being who indulges in abstract meditations, and coins fine phrases which have very little bearing upon the business of life. He is supposed, as Hume remarks, "to contribute nothing either to the advantage or pleasure of society, while he lives remote from communication with mankind, and is wrapped up in principles and opinions equally remote from comprehension." But the school which in France appropriated the honourable appellation was assuredly not composed of men who soared in thought above the clouds. So far from pursuing their mathematical and physical studies in the privacy of the closet, its members were eager to remove the methods of pure science from this seclusion, and to apply them to religion, to politics, to conduct. Philosophy, in their dialect, meant perhaps originally no more than the effort to look at facts without "prejudice." But it came ultimately to be synonymous with an organised attack, not merely on Christianity or even on religion, but, on morality and on the State. The very idea of abstract thought, in the sense of thought not applied to practical affairs, was as a rule disagreeable to the *philosophes*. "Il faut sabrer la théologie," said Diderot to Romilly, and the same fate was destined for metaphysics. The minor differences among the band were as nothing compared with their unanimity on the "fundamentals": unqualified materialism in ontology, uncompromising sensationalism in epistemology and logic, unblushing hedonism in ethics. With whatever diffidence and

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hesitation such views may have been at first announced, their champions, as time went on, gained boldness and assurance. Between the middle of the sixth and the middle of the seventh decade of the century, "philosophy" acquired a loud voice and an aggressive manner. Ostensibly the handmaid of toleration, it grew intolerant. Professedly sceptical and cautious, it became proselytising and dogmatic. The feebleness of their orthodox opponents inspired the *philosophes* with boundless courage, the backsliding of the one great apostate with boundless rage. That the *philosophes* should have been biassed in opinion and ungenerous in controversy is only natural. Such faults, to borrow a convenient phrase from Diderot, were only some of the "idiotismes de métier." It had been well if, "hors de leur boutique," the philosophers could have shown a tolerably clean record. But we cannot conceal from ourselves that they practised only too faithfully what they were alleged to preach. Most of them shared and enjoyed to the full the vices of the society in which they lived. Conduct was their great theme, and a moralist has no right to complain if his private life is somewhat narrowly scrutinised. The *philosophes* had no one but themselves to thank if more than one generation of plain men believed in all sincerity that free-living must needs go hand-in-hand with free-thinking.[1]

[1] Compare the opinion of the elder Mirabeau. "La philosophie moderne, ou l'art de raisonner l'irreligion, et le relâchement des mœurs en ce genre sont frères : mais s'il fallait entre eux décider lequel des deux est le principe de l'autre, je serais tenté de me déterminer le dernier."—*L'ami des Hommes*, ii. 107.

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Diderot.

In Denis Diderot (1713-1784)[1] we find a singular combination of the *philosophe* and the genius. The son of a cutler at Langres, he was educated by the Jesuits for the Church; but he soon abandoned the thought of that profession, and determined to embark upon the precarious career of letters. That he made the best use of his education we cannot doubt. But his tastes lay rather in the direction of mathematics, and indeed of all science, than in that of the learned tongues, of which he frequently speaks with sovereign contempt. He considered that to "reason justly" was the true end of education, and he conceived that the means by which that must be attained was not a bowing acquaintance with Latin and Greek, but "l'étude des sciences rigoureuses."

He earned a subsistence for a time by private tuition, but willingly drifted more and more into the service of the booksellers. To maintain a wife and family on the pittance which they could or would afford required the closest application. Yet his advice and help were ever at the call of such as had need of them. Whoever desired the benefit of his superior powers was welcome to it for nothing. He was ready to assist a nobleman's cast-off mistress in blackmailing her former protector. He was equally

[1] Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, 2 vols., 1878; Rosenkranz, *Diderot's Leben und Werke*, 2 vols., 1866; Scherer, *Diderot*, 1880; Reinach, *Diderot* (Grands Écrivains Fr.), 1894. The best edition of Diderot's works is that of Assézat and Tourneux, 20 vols., 1875-1877. The *Œuvres choisis*, 2 vols., 1874 (Firmin-Didot), is judiciously selected, and very convenient.

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ready to write a good half of some one else's *magnum opus*. In one or two works whose title-pages bear another name Diderot's hand is unmistakably present. It can only be conjectured in how many he had a finger. Like all busy men he could always find time for additional labours, and he increased his responsibilities as lightly as his tasks. For the better part of ten years no inconsiderable share of his earnings was diverted from its legitimate destination into the purse of a certain Mme. de Puisieux. For her amusement and behoof he wrote, among other things, the *Bijoux indiscrets* (1748), as dull and dirty a thing of its kind as hack ever perpetrated. His most celebrated flame, however, was probably a less expensive luxury; for Sophie Volland lived in family with her widowed mother. The lady had no great beauty, and was a *philosophe* to the finger-tips. How she played her part in the drama we cannot tell. But we know that she was one of the parties to a correspondence of which the more important half has fortunately been preserved, and which constitutes the most complete and formidable, because unconscious, indictment ever presented against Diderot and the society in which he lived.

His religious views.

It was once a vexed question how far Diderot was prepared to go in the direction of categorical negation in theology. The mere statement of such a problem ignores the hypothesis that he was the true father of Holbach's *Système de la nature*. But there is certainly much in Diderot's earlier

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writings to show that at one time he shared, or pretended to share, the vague kind of deism to which Voltaire spasmodically clung. He appears to have attached a definite utilitarian value to the doctrine of retribution in a future life. He expresses pity for the genuine atheist, for whom no consolation is in store. He could argue, reversing the common order of reasoning, from a providence to a God. He could maintain that the doctrine of determinism should be punished by the civil arm. But we know from the *Plan d'une Université* that Diderot was not above accommodating his views to those of a benefactress, and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that he practised considerable reserve in communicating anti-religious knowledge. We can scarcely think it doubtful that at heart he was prepared to go the whole way with the Holbachian group. There is at all events nothing inconsistent with such a view in his first really important work, the *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749), which he followed up with a tract, *Sur les sourds et les muets*, in 1751. The *Lettre sur les aveugles* is an extremely acute, powerful, and (for Diderot) well-knit argument — suggested by the then novel operation for cataract—to show that our ideas depend altogether upon the senses, and that, assuming one of the latter to be removed or never to have existed at all, the former, including our conception of God, must be correspondingly modified. Diderot, in short, was working out the same theory as Condillac developed in his famous parable of the

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statue. The piece is an excellent specimen of Diderot's reasoning powers, enhanced at their best by a touch of that imagination which enabled him to put himself in another man's place. Moreover it is not disfigured by many of those deliberate excursions into filth with which he was wont to diversify his most severe philosophical exercises. The term of imprisonment at Vincennes which it procured for him might be taken as a highly flattering testimonial to its cogency, were it not that we know how capricious was the distribution of such unintentional compliments.

His materialism.

The *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature* (1754) is a collection of aphorisms after the manner of Bacon; and if Lord Macaulay's account of the Baconian philosophy happened to be correct, Diderot must be allowed to have caught the spirit as well as the form of his model with great success. The work, that is to say, is noteworthy as making practical utility the criterion for determining in what direction a man of intelligence should turn his energies. Geometry is "played out"; and the higher mathematics ought in turn to be thrown aside when they have paid their last contribution to our stock of material comfort and convenience. No reluctance, however, to discuss merely abstract questions deterred Diderot from attempting a thorough exposition of the materialistic theory in the *Entretien entre D'Alembert et Diderot*, and the *Rêve de D'Alembert*, with its astounding postscript, at which the gorge of Diogenes himself must infallibly have risen. These highly characteristic dialogues, written about 1769, were not published

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until 1830.[1] Diderot sets about the business in his usual blunt and pushing manner, and states the argument with a vigour which Mr Boythorn might have envied, and which almost concusses an opponent into assent. The passages which are introduced by way of "comic relief" no doubt caused the heartiest merriment at Grandval. Not the Baron himself, nor yet his mother-in-law, could have surpassed them in grossness and brutality. To a more squeamish and less philosophical generation they seem to detract from the force of the polemic instead of adding to it. We derive much more pleasure from the *Entretien d'un philosophe avec la Marechale de* —— (1777). It, too, has a few of those dubious touches without which no work of Diderot's is complete. But upon the whole, it is eminently agreeable to read, besides being a good example of a certain way of looking at religion. The apologue of the young Mexican has gained as much celebrity as any other passage in Diderot's writings, the famous couplet about priests and kings alone excepted.

Diderot as a casuist.

These works, while metaphysical in scope, are full of digressions into ethics and other subjects. A digression was more than Diderot could ever resist, and ethics interested him above all things.

[1] While it is true, as M. Brunetière would have us remember, that many of Diderot's most characteristic works were not published until after his death, it would not be safe to infer that his contemporaries in Paris had absolutely no knowledge of them. We must bear in mind that according to Mme. de Genlis, "Dans la société avant la Révolution les lectures d'ouvrages manuscrits étaient beaucoup plus fréquentes qu'elles ne le sont aujourd'hui."—*Mémoires*, ed. Barrière, xv. 408.

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Here he found room for humour, observation, and even subtlety. Here were opportunities for rhetoric, for praise and blame, for the flash in the eye and the tear in the voice. Hence it is not astonishing that fragments, like the *Entretien d'un père avec ses enfants* (1773), and that other *Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public de nos actions particulières* (1798), are superior even to the best of his more speculative tracts. Fragments they are, though complete in themselves, for all Diderot's work has the air of being more or less fragmentary. If Diderot had been less discursive, he might perhaps have written one of the shrewdest, most instructive, and most entertaining books on human conduct ever penned. As it is, in the pieces just named he raises and debates certain questions of casuistry with inimitable freshness and gusto. He views the problem, or tries to view it, from every side, and he has the grand merit of leaving the question as open at the end of the discussion as it was to start with. He had a thorough appreciation of the complexity of affairs. He knew, for instance, that no rule can be laid down for settling when a man is justified in defying the law of the land for the sake of a good object and in obedience to his "conscience." His own moral temperament inclined him to look upon such transgressions with leniency if not with approval. But, with his impressive power of driving straight to the heart of the matter, he dismisses the sophistry that "le sage" is entitled to judge for himself, and that therefore no laws are binding upon him. The closing words of the *Entretien* are those put into the

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mouth of his wise old father, as he assumes his night-cap: "I should not mind if there were one or two people in the town of your way of thinking; but I would not live there if they all thought the same." Diderot as a casuist may be inconclusive, but he is eminently stimulating. Nor can he ever resist bringing himself into the book. No matter how austere and unpromising the theme, the living and impetuous Diderot is only less palpably present than when he is avowedly giving vent to his *Régrets sur ma vieille robe de chambre* (*circ.* 1767). Even in an historical work like the *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron* (1778-1782), he turns aside to vindicate himself against the calumnies of Rousseau, though these have no very obvious relation with Seneca, who is the hero of the piece. This exuberance of vitality is far from displeasing. We may fairly apply to Diderot his own commentary on Greuze: "Il est un peu vain; mais sa vanité est celle d'un enfant; c'est l'ivresse du talent." And this vanity is never tainted by any admixture of those base and petty qualities—the jealousy, the suspicion, the meanness—which are so apparent in the character of Voltaire. Diderot was a true and loyal friend. His abandonment at a critical moment by D'Alembert made no difference in his affection and regard for that essentially peace-loving "coryphée de la science mathématique." Even Rousseau, who quarrelled with everybody, found it no easy matter to break with Diderot. He had a personal charm and *bonhomie*, an openness of temper, and a generosity of spirit, which no one in his circle could approach.

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Diderot was at bottom almost as much of a sentimentalist as Rousseau, though in him the counterbalancing qualities were of heavier metal. When he lets himself go, he can rant as well as the Genevan. He apparently thought that to rhapsodise about maternity absolved him from all obligation to conjugal fidelity; and the *Éloge de Richardson* (1761) is just such a rigmarole of sentiment, dashed with hysteria, as Julie and her Saint-Preux would have revelled in. The result is a curious, if possibly superficial, inconsistency in Diderot's ethical attitude. On the one hand, he is disposed to trace all human action to self-interest, and to deny the freedom of the will. On the other, he falls into ecstasies at the contemplation of virtue, and scatters praise and blame as though they had any meaning when applied to an involuntary and inevitable act. His code of morals was that which sets generosity before justice, and prefers the virtues of impulse to those of calculation. Here, we shall be told, is the inevitable reaction from Pascal and asceticism. Perhaps it is rather an attempt to accommodate the theory of ethics to the practice—always a less troublesome process than the reverse one. Diderot proceeded on the assumption that man's instincts are fundamentally good, and that he has only to follow them and to gratify his appetites in order to achieve social wellbeing. So far from trying to evade the consequences of this view, he hastened to meet them half-way by delivering a violent assault upon marriage in the *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772-1798) than which there is nothing shal-

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lower or more futile in his writings. Diderot in effect, as has been well said, is perhaps the most adequate realisation which literary history affords of the ἀκόλαστος, the antithesis of the σώφρων.

His industry ranged over a wide field. The mathematical treatises and such works as the *Leçons de clavecin* are too technical to be dealt with as literature; and his contributions to the drama will be noticed in their proper place. Here, however, may be mentioned the *Réflexions sur Térence*, the *Entretien sur le "Fils Naturel,"* and especially the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*. These entitle him to far greater consideration as a critic than might have seemed his due after the *Éloge* on Richardson, which appears to be inspired by the recollection of a maxim of Vauvenargues, "C'est un grand signe de médiocrité de louer toujours modérément." That Richardson produced a very deep impression upon Diderot, as he did upon all his French contemporaries, is proved, if by nothing else, by that powerful and sombre work, *La Réligieuse* (1760), which is throughout reminiscent of *Clarissa*. But Diderot was acutely sensitive to external influences, and *Jacques le fataliste* (1773) is equally redolent of *Tristram Shandy*. These essays of his in fiction fall rather to be treated along with the next period, for they exhale something of the new spirit which was to animate the romantic movement. This is even more true of the *Salons* (1759-1781), in which Diderot invented a wholly novel species of art-criticism, and which many of his admirers consider his supreme achievement. They too must abide their proper turn.

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It remains but to speak of the *Neveu de Rameau*, which, written somewhere about 1773, made its first appearance (1805) in a German translation from the pen of Goethe. It touches upon many subjects from morals to music; it abounds in the most vivid sketches of contemporary manners; it analyses the distemperature of the times with merciless exactitude; and, above all, it is a masterly piece of character-drawing. Whether the younger Rameau be taken from the life or no, matters not one whit. The features, the behaviour, the man, may have been there for all the world to see. But only the eye of genius could so note, and only the hand of genius so reproduce them. It is said that Diderot as a talker was considerably superior to Diderot as a writer. Little or none of his conversation has reached posterity. But if he talked better stuff than the *Neveu de Rameau*, we may well execrate the stupidity of his henchman Naigeon in having failed to record even the scantiest odds and ends of his golden speech.

The Neveu de Rameau.

The writings we have enumerated (and the enumeration does not pretend to be exhaustive) might of themselves have sufficed for the life-work of a busy man. But in point of magnitude they shrink into insignificance by the side of that colossal monument of Diderot's versatility and application, the *Encyclopédie; ou dictionnaire des sciences, des arts, et des métiers*. This memorable undertaking assumed proportions under Diderot's direction far transcending those of the comparatively unambitious

The Encyclopædia.

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compilation of Ephraim Chambers, upon which it was originally modelled. By a singular stroke of irony, the "privilége" (not so much the licence to print as the grant of copyright) for the work was obtained from the Chancellor Daguesseau (1668-1751), an upright and honourable man, of strong conservative opinions, who still occupies a niche in the temple of French literature in respect of his dignified and old-fashioned oratory. Diderot presently associated with himself in the editorship D'Alembert, whose name was at that time much more distinguished than his own; and all the most eminent *savants* of the day were enlisted in the service. The *Prospectus*, from Diderot's own pen, appeared in 1750, and the first volume was launched in 1751.

A volume appeared in each of the succeeding six years, and, so far, the book pursued its course in comparatively smooth water. This was due in part to a studied economy of free thought, but still more to the indulgence of Malesherbes (1721-1794), who was acting-censor of the press from 1750 to 1763.[1] But even Malesherbes, predisposed as he was in favour of the Encyclopædists, could not stay the gathering storm. It burst soon after the publication of the seventh volume in 1757, and its fury was redoubled by the appearance in the following year of *De l'esprit*. The article which brought matters to a crisis was that by D'Alembert upon "Geneva," not

[1] For the singular story of Malesherbes' term of office, see Brunetière, *La direction de la librairie sous Malesherbes*, in the *Études critiques*, 2nd series.

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by any means a first-rate performance, but one which succeeded in displeasing all parties. It annoyed the orthodox Catholics by attacking the doctrines of the Church; the Genevan Protestants by complimenting them upon their implicit Socinianism; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau by condemning that simplicity of life and manners with which he supposed the institution of the theatre to conflict. The "privilége" granted in 1746 was withdrawn, and in 1759 D'Alembert definitely retired from the direction of the work. In these circumstances, Diderot resolved to take the whole burden on his own shoulders, for a remuneration which was wholly incommensurate with its weight, but which at least provided him with bread and butter. At the end of 1765 the remaining ten volumes were delivered to the subscribers, and the task was completed. Eleven volumes of plates were added in 1772, and seven supplementary volumes in 1776.

For us the significance of the Encyclopædia lies, not in its details, but, in the work as a whole. It is the book which at once expressed and moulded the philosophic creed. It consolidated the rationalist party and gave unity to its aims, and concentration to its efforts. The common object of attack is no secret. La Harpe was not far out when he described the work as a very "arsénal d'irréligion." In the opening volumes the language was judiciously castigated to avoid giving needless offence. In the later ones, the officious timidity of Le Breton, the publisher, somewhat toned down the vehemence of Diderot.

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But it was a sound instinct which made churchmen and Christians take the alarm at an early stage. The names of Bacon, Locke, and Newton were, of course, put in the forefront of the enterprise. But the true spiritual parent of the Encyclopædia was Pierre Bayle. To think of Diderot's part in those five-and-thirty volumes is to lose all other feelings in amazement. It is the same, whether we regard the vigilance of his superintendence, the multiplicity of the subjects which he himself dealt with, or the fortitude with which he bore the disappointments and faced the suspense incident to the preparation of this great repository of knowledge. The most remarkable branch of his labours is his handling of the processes and operations of industry. He haunted the forge, the workshop, and the loom, eager to master the most trifling details, astute to surprise the secret of every piece of mechanism. Thus he spared no pains to make the great work that "dictionnaire de métiers" it professed to be; and his trouble was rewarded by success. We cannot doubt that he was sustained in his great task by the ardent desire for posthumous renown which he defended with so much eloquence and enthusiasm in his letters to Falconet the sculptor (1765-1767). We may smile at the avidity with which he grasped at this shadow of a shade. But we may admit his title to exclaim that posterity would be indeed ungrateful if it forgot him who had kept it so steadily in mind.

Diderot's colleague in the editorship of the En-

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cyclopædia, Jean Le Rond D'Alembert (1717-1783),[1] was the natural son of Mme. de Tencin and of some person unknown. Frugal, industrious, and painstaking, he attained considerable eminence in science, and his treatises on dynamics and other allied themes were highly valued in their day. From motives either of prudence or of self-respect, he displayed much less eagerness than most of the *philosophes* to come into close personal contact with foreign potentates, though he did not disdain to partake of Frederick's bounty. His disposition was cheerful and contented; and he had the *cachet* of discretion and respectability.

D'Alembert.

His *Discours préliminaire* at the beginning of the first volume of the Encyclopædia is an ambitious and not wholly unsuccessful attempt to map out the vast region of human knowledge. The style is clear, precise, and unemotional; and there is little spontaneity or grace. He spent much time upon a translation of Tacitus, but he cannot be said to have acquired the gift of trenchant epigram in the process. In the *Discours*, as elsewhere, he is careful to follow the line of least resistance. His real sentiments about "l'infâme" he reserved for the eye of his constant correspondent, "mon cher et illustre maître," Voltaire. He avowed the opinion that "la vraie philosophie est de ne forcer aucune barrière," in the *Essai sur la société des gens de lettres avec les grands* (1753), in which he deplores the foibles of the former,

[1] Bertrand, *D'Alembert* (Grands Écrivains Fr.), 1889; *Œuvres*, ed. Belin, 1821.

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exhorting them to self-respect and independence, and scornfully rejects the patronage of the latter. The piece has most of the faults apparently inherent in appeals on behalf of any body of men for greater social consideration. But it acted like the call of a trumpet upon the men of letters, rallied them to a common standard, and helped to form them into a distinct "profession."

Of D'Alembert's article on "Geneva" we have already spoken. His *Éléments de philosophie* appeared in 1759, and the *Éclaircissements* in 1765. In the same year he produced a pamphlet on the *Destruction des Jésuites en France*, which is characterised by good sense and moderation, and can have been grateful neither to Jesuit nor to Jansenist. This, with the two *Lettres* on the same subject, may be said to rank immediately after his *Éloges*—a species of writing of which the difficulties are neither few nor trifling, but of which he showed himself a complete master. He was emphatically a fit and proper person to be a member of the Academy, of which he was elected in 1754; and his appointment to the secretaryship in 1772 marked the complete success of the *philosophes* in capturing that body. Yet one cannot help contrasting him with the colossal Diderot, who, to his no small mortification, was never of the forty. Poor, thin, and flavourless is the best of D'Alembert's work compared with the generous and full-bodied vintage of his mighty colleague.

The two works next to be noticed are constructed upon a very different plan from that of "forcing no

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barriers." We have already mentioned that the publication, in 1758, of a treatise, *De l'esprit*, contributed materially to aggravate the troubles in which the Encyclopædia found itself plunged. Its author was a farmer-general, of Dutch extraction, and herbalist parentage, whose name was Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715-1771).[1] Of his private life we know that he was liked in general society, and hated *sur ses terres*. The work[2] was received with awe by the moderate, with rapture by the more advanced, of the rationalist school, and with execrations by the Church and by Rousseau. The gist of its doctrine is that self-interest is the sole spring of action. Moralists will only get their maxims obeyed when they abandon the tone of reproach for the language of personal benefit. The bent of all men is towards their happiness (*bonheur*); to try to counteract that inclination would be useless, and the attempt would be ruinous if it succeeded. Consequently, men can be made virtuous by no other means than by identifying the interest of the individual with that of the community.

Helvétius and his De l'esprit.

This was no news. Helvétius, as Mme. du Deffand pointed out, was disclosing "everybody's secret." Moreover, to say that the voluptuary and the martyr are animated by one and the same motive is to throw scant light on human conduct. From the point of view of the authorities, the danger of the work lay in the attack, express and implied, upon existing institu-

[1] See Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, vol. ii.

[2] Its posthumous successor, *De l'homme* (1774), is of little account, though it provoked a refutation from Diderot.

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tions, and in the deduction that the reformation of a people's morals must always be preceded by a reformation of its laws. Yet there is that in the manner even more than in the matter of the performance which might well have alarmed persons by no means concerned to maintain the prevailing order of things. Its whole tone is callous, flippant, and unworthy. The anecdotes which garnish the discourse are not nearly so amusing as they are licentious. One is deterred from pronouncing the *De l'esprit* to be absolutely worthless chiefly by the recollection of the powerful influence it is said to have exerted upon that less gay and more responsible utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham.

Holbach and his Système de la nature.

The charge of undue levity and facetiousness cannot justly be brought against a book which created an even greater sensation, if possible, than that of Helvetius. The *Système de la nature* (1770) appeared under the name of Jean-Baptiste de Mirabaud (1675-1760), who was Secretary to the Academy, but is generally attributed to Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789),[1] a German of great wealth, whose hospitable instincts won him the name of the "maître d'hôtel" of philosophy. We know from Diderot's correspondence what manner of man this gross, sardonic, but not ill-natured, Mæcenas was; yet the *Système* exhibits a viciousness of temper for which his guest's account scarcely prepares us. Here is dogmatic atheism *sans phrase*. No loophole is left for "honest doubt"; and the universe and man are abandoned to the withering grasp of an inexorable

[1] See Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, vol. ii.

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necessity. The Baron, like Diderot, was a materialist, and as rigid a determinist as the most bigoted disciple of Calvin. That man is neither more nor less than an automaton had been maintained by Julien Offroy de La Mettrie (1709-1751) in his *L'homme-machine* (1748) and *L'homme-plante* (*circ.* 1748); and the doctrine had become a vital part of the philosophic creed. The term mind, or soul, is simply like the term chance, a device to conceal our ignorance; and the very notion of immortality is absurd. The only hope for improvement in human character and conduct is so to alter laws and institutions as to persuade men that their private interest and pleasure coincide with the interest and pleasure of the whole community. What answer is to be made to the man who says, "*Experto crede:* I have found that my private interest and pleasure coincide with nothing of the sort," Holbach is as little able to tell us as any other hedonist.

Thus the foundation is laid for an unsparing attack on religious beliefs and civilised society, utterly unhistorical in spirit, but in aim as well-directed as it is violent. At all events, both Frederick the Great and Voltaire were scared into composing rejoinders; and Voltaire took particularly good care that news of his counterblast should reach the ears of the French king. But counterblasts were in vain, and the *Système* did what it was appointed unto it to do. It has often been suspected that Diderot was responsible for the work, not merely in the way of suggestion and inspiration, but also as the actual author of certain noteworthy passages. As regards

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style, the conjecture is not flattering, for the book is verbose and declamatory. The impression it produces depends more upon the unflinching audacity and rough vigour of the ideas than upon any grace or felicity of expression. Yet the suspicion may be correct, and we know that the views expressed in the book were in consonance with the Pantophile's. Holbach died on the very eve of the great upheaval. He was thus deprived of the pleasure of seeing the great Goddess of Reason worshipped in Nôtre Dame; but he also escaped that death by the guillotine which had otherwise infallibly been his portion.

Brief mention must suffice for the remainder of the *philosophes*, though one at least of them was a man of first-rate talents. Friedrich Melchior Grimm (1723-1807)[1] was another German, who contrived to establish himself upon a comfortable footing in the philosophic circle. He was an authority upon music; and a pamphlet called *Le petit prophète de Boehmischbroda* (1753), upon one of the musical controversies of the day, is the most celebrated among his minor works. What he is chiefly remembered by is the *Correspondance littéraire*, for which he was responsible in whole or in part from 1754 to 1790. Designed to keep foreign potentates with literary tastes *au fait* of all that was going on in Paris, it forms an invaluable record of contemporary literature, science, art, and drama. Its inception was due to the Abbé Raynal, and the assistance of other writers — notably of Diderot —

Grimm.

[1] Scherer, *Melchior Grimm*, 1887.

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was invoked from time to time. But the chief credit of the undertaking belongs to Grimm, and the work stamps him as a far-seeing, unemotional, and hard-headed man. His share in the squabbles of the *philosophes* is no concern of ours, nor need we discuss how far he helped to wreck the life of Rousseau, who is believed by the credulous to have drawn him for us in the respectable character of Wolmar. In point of purely speculative ability, no thinker was superior to Etienne Bonnot de Mably de Condillac (1715-1780).[1] In the *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), the *Traités des systèmes* (1749), and, above all, the *Traité des sensations* (1754), he developed a creed of pure sensationalism which supplied the *philosophes* with such psychological and metaphysical equipment as they possessed. Condillac illustrated his main contention by the famous image of a statue, with the potentiality of human thought, gradually awakened to life and consciousness by the gift of the several senses in succession. In logic he was a strict nominalist. Identity was in his view the test of truth; and to him we owe the maxim that science is no more than "une langue bien faite." As becomes this theory, his style is irreproachably clear.

Condillac.

The *Contes moraux* of Jean François Marmontel (1723-1799) give evidence of a sprightliness and a turn for delicate irony that remind one sometimes of his master, Voltaire. Nothing could be better of its kind than his sketch

Marmontel.

[1] Cousin, *Histoire de la philosophie moderne*, t. iii.

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of the character who "parce qu'il a une perruque ronde et les vapeurs noires se croit un philosophe anglais," or that of the "philosophe soi-disant," that admirer of ancient simplicity and contemner of modern extravagance, who denounces the cruelty of killing oxen and sheep, yet eats his beef and mutton while he becomes intoxicated "en faisant la peinture du clair ruisseau où se désaltéraient ses pères." A pretty wit and a measure of good sense are also the recommendation of Charles Pineau Duclos (1704-1772), who, after opening his literary career in a decidedly frivolous vein, published in 1750 his *Considérations sur les mœurs de ce siècle*, which deservedly attained great popularity in its generation. But the work is not very profound; while his *Histoire de Louis XI.* (1745) is chiefly remarkable for "une sécheresse rebutante," as La Harpe has it. For the rest, it should be noted that, though not of the orthodox ecclesiastical party, he had sufficient independence to hold aloof from the *philosophes*, and that while secretary of the Academy (1755-1772) he did his best to prevent that institution from becoming the prey of any one faction.

Duclos.

The mere mention of Antoine Léonard Thomas (1732-1785) and his ambitious *Essai sur le caractère, les mœurs, et l'esprit des femmes dans les différents siècles* (1772) must serve our turn; nor need we linger on the Abbé Raynal (1711-1796), who wrote *L'histoire du parliament d'Angleterre* (1750), and achieved fame by his (and Diderot's) *Histoire philosophique des établissements et du commerce des*

Raynal.

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Européens dans les deux mondes (1772). His narrative is lively enough, and is seasoned with many salacious passages; he makes a vigorous attack on the Church and on religion; but in his tone he shows traces of being affected by that potent spirit which had grown up in antagonism to the teaching of the *philosophes*, and at the consideration of which we have now arrived.

J.-J. Rousseau.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)[1] was the son of a watchmaker at Geneva. We need not enter into the details of his squalid life, or of the misery he so sensibly aggravated by his own behaviour. From many people he received substantial assistance and support. But he requited all—Mme. de Warens, Diderot, Mme. d'Épinay, Hume — with the same ingratitude. In the first of his *Lettres à M. de Malesherbes* (1762), he coolly informs that gentleman and the world that every duty, no matter how trivial, is insupportable to him. "Tout bienfait exige reconnaissance, et je me sens le cœur ingrat, par cela

[1] Morley, *Rousseau*, 1873, 2nd ed., 1878; Streckeisen-Moultou, *J.-J. Rousseau, ses amis et ses ennemis*, 2 vols., 1865; Brockerhoff, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, sein Leben und seine Werke*, 1863-1874; Moreau, *J.-J. Rousseau et le siècle philosophe*, 1870; Girardin, *J.-J. Rousseau, sa vie et ses ouvrages*, 1875; Chuquet, *J.-J. Rousseau* (Grands Écrivains Fr.), 1893; Graham, *Rousseau* (Foreign Classics), 1882. Many other monographs have been written on various aspects of Rousseau's character, and on various periods of his life. *Œuvres*, 27 vols., 1825. Almost all his important writings have been frequently reprinted, and are easily procurable. There is a convenient and well-chosen collection of his *Petits Chefs-d'œuvre*, 1 vol., 1876 Firmin-Didot).

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seul, que la reconnaissance est un devoir." It is certain that on this head his practice was on all-fours with his principles. He himself, in the memorable *Confessions*, has told us the story of his life with no little particularity. Few men, he observes, with a sigh of complacency, have wept as much as he has. He plumes himself on his "dispositions à l'attendrissement." The front of his waistcoat is perpetually bathed in tears. He recounts innumerable instances of his own meanness, lechery, and cunning with a grin of self-satisfaction. It may be that the picture is overcharged. Yet one had forgiven a thousand *polissonneries* had he never taken up pen to relate them. What closes the door of indulgence is the fact that he has set the whole record down without a tremor of hesitation or a twinge of shame. His *vie intime* is essentially a matter for the pathologist. At the same time, it is neither possible nor desirable altogether to forget what sort of creature it was whose words kindled a flame in the human breast which the lapse of more than a century has scarce sufficed to quench. When we find him enlarging upon the duties of paternity, or depicting the charms of the domestic hearth, or prescribing a dietary for infants, it is as well to bear in mind that the five pledges of affection with which Therèse le Vasseur presented him were one and all (or so he asserts, for there is an alternative) bundled off to the Enfants Trouvés.

When Rousseau came to Paris, he found access to society an easy matter. Nay, after the production of his opera, the *Muses galantes* (1747), the king him-

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self was disposed to be gracious. But neither Courts nor salons were for him. He makes no secret of his feelings. "Je hais les grands," exclaims this lover of his species, in a burst of passion, "je hais leur état, leur dureté, leurs préjugés, leur petitesse, et tous leurs vices. Je les hairais bien davantage, si je les méprisais moins," he adds, with an almost feminine touch of exasperation. In all his parade of independence he resembles nothing so much as a waiting-woman, who proclaims with a toss of her head that, to be sure, "service is no inheritance." But, while his invincible shyness, and what Taine calls "la rancune du plébéien pauvre," were elements in his mental attitude towards Parisian society, it is certain that he genuinely detested many of the views to which he was compelled to listen. His training had been neither literary nor scientific. His youth had been passed amid scenes of natural beauty; and it was the "lumières" of nature alone that he had been accustomed to regard. Hence this son of a Swiss mechanic so loathed the pleasantries of the Holbachs, the Grimms, and the rest of their crew, that he determined wholly to forgo the benefit of their society. The very men, it seemed to him, who were by way of worshipping reason and who thought they had banished prejudice, were themselves the victims of a hideous delusion. Their philosophy was the creature of a day, born and dying in the corner of a large city. But its consequences had been shocking. "Dans ce siècle ou régnent si fièrement les préjugés et les erreurs sous le nom de philosophie, les hommes

His relations with the philosophes.

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abrutis par leur vain savoir, ont fermé leur esprit à la voix de la raison, et leur cœur à celle de la nature."

To give heed to nature, and to hearken to that inward voice which is her interpreter—this is the root-principle of Rousseau's gospel, and therein lay the secret of its attraction for an intensely artificial society. Rousseau actually talks of having "demonstrated" the proposition that man is naturally good. Everything is right when it leaves the great Author's hands. Everything degenerates in the hands of the naturally good being. By some unexplained mischance, while man is originally perfect, human institutions are bad, and react upon him in the most disastrous manner. The moral is plain, "Oubliez les institutions, et consultez la nature." Accordingly, when the academy of Dijon propounded the question, whether the revival of sciences and arts had contributed to make morals purer, Rousseau returned an emphatic negative in his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750). It is of no moment that Diderot may possibly have suggested the answer. The *Discours* contains in germ most of the ideas which Rousseau afterwards elaborated, just as the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) contains in outline his application of those ideas to the State and to politics. He was the prime originator of the simple yet comprehensive theory that courts for cowards were erected, and churches built to please the priest.

His gospel according to nature.

Such protests against the "spirit of the age,"

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form inevitable and useful episodes in the history of thought. Optimism was indeed the professed creed of the day; but men were secretly longing for a less sophisticated ideal of life. The effect of the two *Discours* and of Rousseau's later works was none the less that he chose to cast his ideas in a thoroughly conventional mould. An interesting chapter might be written upon the baleful influence of Plutarch on modern European thought. Rousseau was a slave to it, and readily assimilated the conception of "nature" bequeathed to the world by the Stoics, and transmitted to later generations by the jurists. Why it should be natural for man to live like Robinson Crusoe, and unnatural for him to live in the society of his fellows, natural for him to cry or speak, and unnatural for him to read or write, why, in a word, the last of his many inventions should be deemed less natural than the first, has never been explained by Rousseau or by any one else. These difficulties at once struck the cool intellect of Grimm, but they never distressed Rousseau. Sometimes he talks as if to follow nature were identical with following animal instinct. At other times he seems to recognise that an essential factor in wellbeing is to be deaf to passion and to be guided by reason. In the recesses of his mind there always lurks the feeling that nature means Alpine scenery, wild flowers, and simplicity (albeit with the very artificial shelter of a roof over one's head), while art and science mean the gilded iniquity of Paris. But with Rousseau, as with most philosophers who have employed his vocabulary, the distinction between what is natural and unnatural is

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shifting and arbitrary. The reformer who builds upon it really treats the epithets as a vehicle of applause or censure; and "nature," as an equivalent for the ultimate end or standard, proves in the long-run to be neither better nor worse than "the scheme of the universe," "the eternal fitness of things," or any other formula which obtained currency in the eighteenth century.

The Contrat social.

Rousseau makes as great a parade of stating his premises with clearness and precision as Mrs Micawber. Yet the cavalier way in which he deals with facts might beget alarm in the most confiding. The *Contrat social* (1762), which is the best known of all his less bulky writings, proceeds upon a number of wholly gratuitous assumptions as to the condition of primitive man. The first chapter opens with the startling announcement that man was born free, and is everywhere in chains. Yet the works of travel which had been issuing from the press for a hundred years might surely have set him upon inquiring whether the life of a savage is not beset with an infinitely more thorny hedge of convention than the life even of a Frenchman under the old *régime*. Strenuous efforts have been made to show that a reasonably coherent system of political philosophy may be deduced from his writings, and that he generally meant the very opposite of what he said.[1]

[1] See especially Wallace, *Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics*, 1899, and Bosanquet, *Philosophical Theory of the State*, 1899, chap. iv. *et seq.* Mr Bosanquet proves that, by the opening sentence of chap. i. of the *Contrat social*, Rousseau meant, "man is born in animal isolation, and by subservience to social law he attains the civil liberty by which alone he becomes truly man"!

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But the truth is that he was as destitute of the true historic spirit as Voltaire himself; and thus the *Contrat social* comes to be written in a dialect which is now almost obsolete, and was always extremely liable to be misunderstood. We know that the "social compact" is the vainest of figments; that no such bargain, with all the conditions and incidents alleged, was ever struck; and that to make society rest upon the sanctity of any transaction of the sort is to make the elephant who supports our world stand upon the back of a tortoise. To say with Rousseau that the act of association in the State is the most voluntary in the world, and that man, being born his own master, cannot be made a subject without his own consent, is to talk nonsense. But a foundation has to be laid for capital punishment; and so we must make believe that every murderer who gets his due has implicitly consented to his own execution by the very fact of becoming a member of the State. Who can wonder that political philosophy should have been despised by practical men, so long as it busied itself with multiplying such lame and impotent fictions?

It has been said that Rousseau's abiding work in this field of thought was the rehabilitation of the individual as the unit of society. To renounce one's liberty, he tells us, is to renounce the rights of humanity, and even its duties. But when the individual has once entered into the social compact, his natural liberty disappears, and does not revive until the compact is violated. The corporation called

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into being by the act of association cannot bind itself to one of its constituent members. The mere fact of its existence makes it what it ought to be, and it is in the bond that whoever refuses to comply with *la volonté générale* shall be "forced to be free," in the sense of that conventional liberty which the social union supplies. Here we have Leviathan with a vengeance. Certain articles of faith may be fixed by the sovereign body as "sentiments de sociabilité," to which he who does not subscribe shall be banished as "insociable." If any one, having publicly embraced this creed, conducts himself as an unbeliever, he may be put to death. The most eminent persecutors would have asked for no more. But, behold! one touch of the magician's wand and the formidable monster melts into thin air. There is still room in the State for a J.-J. Rousseau. The *volonté générale* is infallible, but its abode is in the clouds; and its vicegerent on earth is the *volonté de tous*, which is not binding upon the "conscientious objector." He, therefore, must be the judge whether the compact has been violated or no, and whether the right to natural liberty has once more emerged. He will be justified in coercing a recalcitrant majority by means of an enlightened and determined minority, for while "de lui-même le peuple veut toujours le bien, de lui-même il ne le voit pas toujours." The practical outcome of such principles was admirably seen in the Reign of Terror; and it must be allowed that no system could have been more artfully contrived to foment rebellion in the first place and to stimulate oppression in the

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second. But, to evolve anything of substantive and permanent value out of such a chaos of abstractions, we require an exceedingly free translation into the language of a very different philosophy.

Of Rousseau's strictly controversial writings the *Lettres écrites de la montagne* (1765), in which he describes and analyses the polity of his native town, is the most elaborate and sustained. It lacks something, however, of that lively emotion which thrills in the *Lettre à M. de Beaumont* (1762) in defence of *Émile*, which that prelate had condemned; while that, in turn, must yield to the *Lettre sur les spectacles* (1758), which is a rejoinder to D'Alembert's article on "Geneva," and which marks the final rupture between Rousseau and the Encyclopædists. Even in this comparatively short piece Jean-Jacques cannot be consistent. D'Alembert had recommended the citizens of Geneva to combine "la sagesse de Lacédémone et la sagesse d'Athènes" by tolerating the theatre; and he had urged the usual commonplaces, which every one repeats and no one believes, about the refining and emollient influence of that institution. Rousseau, on the other hand, contended that the theatre always follows and never leads; that it cannot alter the taste and morals which it is its business to reproduce; and that its ethical standard will never be higher than that of the audience. If it be true that the stage can but reflect, and so fortify and confirm, the existing national character, it is difficult to see why it should be tabooed among a people whose character is

The Lettre sur les spectacles.

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unimpeachable. But we must not look too closely at Rousseau's reasoning; and the fact remains that the *Lettre sur les spectacles*, his own favourite work, his "Benjamin," is a complete epitome of his most characteristic views. Here is Rousseau, the social and political idealist, the foe of luxury, the friend of equality, modest comfort, and hard work. Here is Rousseau, the puritan, convinced that the actor who plays a thief will be apt to steal. Here is Rousseau, the apologist of drunkenness, which promotes goodwill and cordiality. Here is Rousseau, the champion of the natural as opposed to the artificial, who will have no play-acting, but will permit singing and dancing under stringent regulations, for are not these diversions an inspiration of nature? Here is Rousseau, the woman-hater (though he always found in the sex "une grande vertu consolatrice"), who advises husbands to go to the club, like the stern and hardy men of England. Here is Rousseau, the eulogist of domestic happiness. Here is Rousseau, the mordant critic of Parisian society. Here, finally, is Rousseau, the *philosophe*, who considers that female modesty ought decidedly to be encouraged, because it acts as an incentive to the passions of the male, and so obviates the serious risk of the extinction of the species. All these parts and some others are played by him in this one *Lettre* with indescribable animation and earnestness, and with the tear of a virtuous sensibility ever at his call. Only when he touches on the relations of the sexes are we instantly aware of that "sour, gloomy, and ferocious medley of

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pedantry and lewdness" which drew down the chastisement of Burke. Almost everything Rousseau has written on that perilous topic is unspeakably disgusting and base.

We have all heard how Rousseau acclimatised the "génie du nord" in French literature, and, without inquiring whether a hard and fast line can safely be drawn between the "esprit latin" and the "esprit septentrional," we may affirm that he effected a breach in the continuity of the classical tradition which shocked those who had been most active in diffusing foreign, and, in particular, English, ideas. He imported, or at least nursed into life, certain elements of thought which had the appearance of striking novelty, and he imparted to French prose a note, a tone, a feeling, hitherto unknown, but pregnant with momentous consequences for the rest of Europe. His literary influence, however,—flowing chiefly from *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1760), *Émile* (1762), the *Confessions* (1782-1790), and the remarkable *Réveries d'un promeneur solitaire* (1777)—will fall to be fully considered in the succeeding volume. We have already indicated the more important of his political and social views, the influence of which has been at once far-reaching and powerful. Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, came under his spell. Political thinkers are still engaged in dissecting his arguments and exposing his fallacies.[1] The resounding phrases in which predatory designs are commonly wrapped up, are mostly woven after his pattern. Upon comparing his point of view with that of the

[1] See, for example W. S. Lilly, *First Principles in Politics*, 1899.

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philosophes, we recognise in the former greater potentialities alike for blessing and for mischief. The Encyclopædists ignored some of the most vital ingredients in human nature, and, indeed, denied their very existence. Rousseau instinctively grasped their importance, but failed to see that in juggling with them he was handling the most dangerous of combustibles.

The collision between the gospel of sentiment and the gospel of negation materially accelerated the Revolution. Not many more than forty years after the publication of the *Discours sur les sciences*, the quarrel between the two schools came to be fought out, not in pamphlets or in novels with a purpose, but, on the stage of life. The Goddess of Reason, with Hébert and Chaumette for her high priests, was pitted against the Supreme Being, whose interests had been entrusted to Robespierre. The latter divinity secured a brief and bloody triumph. Among her victims was one who may be called the last of the *philosophes*, unless that title belong as matter-of-right to Constantin François de Chassebœuf, Comte de Volney (1757-1820), who lived well on into the nineteenth century, but whose works—a volume of travels (1787), a political treatise, named *Les ruines* (1791), and a Catechism on *La loi naturelle* (1793)—belong, in spirit, if not in date, to our period. Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794),[1] was an excellent

Volney.

Condorcet.

[1] Morley, *Miscellanies*, 1886, vol. ii.; Robinet, *Condorcet, sa vie et son œuvre*, 1895; *Œuvres*, ed. Arago, 1847-1849.

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mathematician, with a strong propensity to reasoning about human affairs on the analogy of the physical sciences. He wrote a life of Turgot in 1786, and one of Voltaire in 1787, more remarkable for ingenuousness than address. He detested Christianity; he denounced priests and tyrants with much warmth; and whatever he wrote was expressed in that strain of spurious lucidity which covers a vast amount of loose thinking. He is chiefly remembered by his *Esquisse d'un tableau des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1795), a performance in which the speculations of a *philosophe* are presented in the rhetoric of a Rousseau. He is strong upon *égalité;* he is fond of stating his propositions in the form of questions which expect no answer; and Great Britain with its "gouvernement machiaveliste," and its "constitution servile et vénale," is an object of his peculiar detestation.[1] The fundamental dogma of the *Esquisse* is the perfectibility of man, in the sense, not merely that he leaves much room for improvement, but also, that there is no limit to the amelioration which is possible for him within a short space of time. That Condorcet believed what he taught is not doubtful, for he wrote in hiding under the proscription of the miscreants

[1] We see here the reaction from the once accepted opinion, to which Montesquieu gave the stamp of his authority, as to the excellence of the British constitution. The typical embodiment of the "literary" view of that system of government is the *Constitution de l'Angleterre* (1771) of John Louis Delolme (1740-1806), a native of Geneva. This work was responsible for much constitution-mongering in its day, but has been wholly superseded by the more practical speculations of men like Bagehot.

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with whom he had been actively co-operating in the task of regenerating the human species. Unluckily, he has omitted to state any solid ground for holding this flattering belief. Yet the work will always remain a typical representative of a class of literature which it is impossible to read without a feeling of regret for wasted talents and fond hopes.

Vauvenargues.

We conclude this chapter by reverting to a writer who is not patient of classification, and who cannot be said appreciably to have influenced his own or any subsequent generation. Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues (1715-1747),[1] belonged to an old family of Provence. A desultory education furnished him with little Latin and no Greek; but he acquired enough knowledge to compare the ancients with the moderns, to the disadvantage of the latter, from a French translation of the inevitable Plutarch. He embraced the profession of arms while a mere boy; and the hardships of several campaigns undermined a naturally feeble constitution, as their expense depleted a light purse. His friendship with Voltaire, his senior by a score of years, is not the least creditable episode in the Patriarch's life. But neither Voltaire's nor his own solicitations could procure him any post in which his aptitude for affairs could be turned to practical account. He died, a disappointed but indomitable man, at the early age of thirty-two.

[1] Morley, *Miscellanies*, vol. ii.; Paléologue, *Vauvenargues* (Grands Écrivains Fr.), 1890; *Œuvres*, ed. Gilbert, 2 vols., 1857.

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Vauvenargues published one volume in his lifetime (1746). It contained a number of pieces, the most important of which was an *Introduction à la connaissance de l'esprit humain*, while the rest included *Réflexions sur divers sujets*, *Conseils à un jeune homme*, a *Méditation sur la foi*, and a collection of *Maximes*. There have since been brought to light an *Essai sur quelques caractères*, some *Dialogues*, and his correspondence. One of his leading aims was to digest the common stock of wisdom regarding men and morals into one coherent scheme. The *Introduction* is too fragmentary to succeed in any such attempt; but the consistency of sentiment which pervades his works is far more valuable than mere formal or logical congruity. His mind was too independent to be in bondage to any sect or clique of thought. Though he learned to combat much of Pascal's teaching, he never lost respect for that great man, or for the great age of French literature which he adorned. He declined to throw religion overboard, and thought it possible to be a Christian "sans être capucin." He makes the good of the community the test of right and wrong. Virtue is "la préférence de l'intérêt général au personnel," vice, "le sacrifice mercenaire du bonheur public à l'intérêt propre." Yet he insists that we are to measure men, not by their actions, which depend so much upon chance, but, by their sentiments and their "génie."

He is one of those moralists who have combined a lofty ideal of conduct with a merciful judgment of their fellow-men. If he is ever severe, it is when

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he comments upon the frivolous temper of the age, and the "ton à la mode." "La maladie de nos jours," he declares, "est de vouloir badiner de tout; on ne souffre qu'à peine un autre ton." His rebuke of this frame of mind is dignified and impressive. He dwells on the inferiority of the intellect to the heart. It is for their hearts, not for their heads, that we like and dislike our neighbours. "Les grandes pensées viennent du cœur," is his most famous aphorism. Abstract sciences count for little in his estimation. Knowledge of mankind is the important thing. The type of man whom at heart he admires is one who, ambitious of glory and enamoured of virtue, has learned by commerce with the world "le secret d'aller à ses fins." Here, perhaps, is the hereditary instinct of a governing class asserting itself. But to such as Vauvenargues, despite his noble birth, the public life of France held out no career.

His literary models were Pascal, La Bruyère, and La Rochefoucauld, especially the last, though their temperaments were widely different. His *Maximes* proper amount to nearly a thousand in number, and it is not surprising that some of them should fall a little flat. He rarely spoils a good point by straining after paradox, and is obscure only often enough to avoid the risk of being numbered among those who, as he says, are blinded by the lucidity of their diction to the error of their matter. We look back upon him, not as a great intellectual force, but as an honourable and high-minded man who somehow contrived to express much of the charm of his personality in terms

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of literature. Not that his intellect is to be despised. If his studies were perfunctory, he had pondered much; and the *Dialogue* between an American and a Portuguese shows that he had revolved in his mind the conception of "nature" with far greater care and to far better purpose than Rousseau ever did. But we go to him for his luminous flashes of insight into human nature, such as the observation that men make duties of the vices peculiar to their callings, or for heart-searching and unexpected truths like the remark that "les grands hommes, en apprenant aux faibles à réfléchir, les ont mis sur la route de l'erreur." We go to him, above all, for a word to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, like the brave and invigorating exhortation, "Il ne faut pas être timide de peur de faire des fautes; la plus grande faute des toutes est de se priver de l'expérience!" In these pages we shall scarcely come across a more engaging or pathetic figure than that of Vauvenargues.

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CHAPTER III.

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY IN ENGLAND.

THE DEISTS—SQUARE AND THWACKUM—THE BANGORIAN CONTROVERSY—BERKELEY—HIS GREAT DOCTRINE—HIS STYLE—HUME—HIS PHILOSOPHY—HIS STYLE—BUTLER—THE 'SERMONS'—THE 'ANALOGY'—HIS STYLE—JOHNSON—HIS "PESSIMISM"—'RASSELAS'—HIS STYLE—PRICE—HUTCHESON—SMITH—LORD KAMES—HARTLEY—REID—THEOLOGIANS—MIDDLETON—LAW—THE 'SERIOUS CALL'—WARBURTON—RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.

ENGLAND, at the commencement of our period, had already plunged into the controversy[1] between the orthodox and the Deistical party. The aim of the latter may roundly be said to have been the elimination from Christianity of the "mythical" or miraculous element of fact upon which it professes to be based. A supreme being of infinite

The Deists.

[1] Upon the whole subject of this chapter in general, and the Deist controversy in particular, consult Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., 1881; Lechler, *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus*, 1841; Abbey and Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols., 1878; Mark Pattison, *Essays*, 1889, vol. ii. p. 42; and Fitzjames Stephen, *Horæ Sabbaticæ*, 3 vols., 1892, *passim*.

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wisdom and goodness was, indeed, permitted to remain in the scheme of the universe. But the creed which set forth his existence and attributes was to be judiciously vague; the problem of reconciling his benevolence with the existence of evil was to be evaded by an amiable optimism; and the common element to all religious beliefs was henceforth to be relied upon, in conjunction with enlightened self-interest, to supply a stable foundation for morality.

Such a conception of religion was not new. In the preceding century Lord Herbert had given expression to very similar opinions, and the "Cambridge Platonists" had followed him in the advocacy of "liberalism" in theology. But the effectual impulse of the Deist movement came from Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity*, the very title of which intimates the cardinal principle of deism—a principle which most of its adversaries would have hastened to accept. Toland and Collins, who have been treated of in the preceding period, were keenly alive to the revolution effected in the physical sciences by the discoveries of Newton, and were disciples of Locke. Their most prominent disciples, in turn, were Matthew Tindal (1653-1733), whose *Christianity as old as the Creation* appeared in 1730, Thomas Woolston (1670-1733), who delivered a violent attack on miracles in his *Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour* (1727), Thomas Chubb (1679-1747), and Thomas Morgan (*d.* 1743). The two last-named, as well as Henry Dodwell, whose *Christianity not founded on Argument* was published

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in 1742, continued a dropping fire after the Deist controversy proper had been terminated by Butler's great work. Yet they belong to the earlier epoch of rationalism rather than to that which was so brilliantly inaugurated by Hume's *Treatise*. Conyers Middleton, together with the more prominent members of the orthodox party, will be noticed later on.

Square and Thwackum.

The men who have been thus unceremoniously enumerated, though they played an appreciable part in the history of English, and still more of German, thought, were mostly persons of mediocre abilities, few attainments, little command of style, and no depth of learning. Pitted against foes of the second or even the third order, they were decidedly overmatched. At first sight their prospects of success might well have seemed brighter than those of the French freethinkers. A pecuniary fine, or a sojourn in the Bench for a few months, was probably the greatest risk they ran in ventilating opinions, the publication of which in France might have been visited with the most barbarous penalties. Yet it was the French, and not the English, sceptics who were aggressive and audacious. As regards the rank and file of the combatants, the first of English novelists has, in Square and Thwackum, depicted for posterity the average deist and his antagonist, with their catch-phrases, their intolerance, and their stupidity, though it may be hoped parenthetically that in the article of private character the picture is overdrawn. But the philosopher is not by many degrees so much beneath Tindal and Woolston as the divine is beneath Law

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and Sherlock. Between him and Butler the distance is merely immeasurable.

The Bangorian controversy.

That branch of the deistical controversy known as the Bangorian, sprang from the publication of a sermon on the *Kingdom of Christ* in 1717. Its author, Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761), the very type of the early Hanoverian prelate, vigorously combated those high opinions as to the status and commission of the clergy which the Caroline theologians had transmitted to the non-juring section of the Church of England. Critics of one stamp will hold that Hoadly did a good day's work for civil and religious liberty. Critics of another will suggest that it was not his business to depreciate the office he held. For us, he is simply an indifferent writer—apt to be dull and long-winded—who happened to raise a prodigious hubbub in his own day and generation.

Berkeley.

George Berkeley (1685-1753),[1] the very antithesis of a Hoadly in temperament and grain, was born near Kilkenny, where he went to school, and whence he proceeded to Trinity College, Dublin. His natural inclination to metaphysical and theological studies may have been strengthened by the influence of Peter Browne (166?-1735), the then Provost of the College, and afterwards Bishop of Cork, as well as by that of William King (1650-1729), the Archbishop of Dublin. These stout controversialists held philosophical views which were revived with some

[1] *Life, Works, and Letters*, ed. A. C. Fraser, 4 vols. Oxford: 1871. *Selections*, ed. the same, 5th ed., 1899. *Berkeley*, by the same (Philosophical Classics), 1899.

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success in the subsequent century. But their direct influence over Berkeley was transitory at the best, for in later life he took particular pains explicitly to reject the opinions enunciated by King in his *Sermon on Predestination* (1709), and by Browne in his *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* (1728), and in his *Things Divine and Supernatural conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (1733).

The list of Berkeley's finished writings begins with the *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), and ends with the *Siris, a Chain of Philosophical Reflections* (1744). In the interval there appeared the *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713), *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher* (1732), and the *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (1733). His minor works include a *Sermon on Passive Obedience*, an *Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain*, and *The Querist*. These last all deal with strictly practical matters, such as the authority of the supreme civil power, the repression of luxury, the reformation of morals, and the encouragement of industry and thrift. It is a mistake to suppose that Berkeley was a mere visionary who took no interest in the social welfare of his neighbours. He did not, it is true, elbow his way into political life, like Swift, who, when Berkeley came to London in 1713, was extremely gracious to that "very ingenious man and great philospher." Preferment came unsought, as it should have come to one who, we know, possessed "every virtue under heaven." The Bishopric of Cloyne may have been no very great matter from an

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English point of view; but it is something that, in an age in which patronage was dispensed with scarcely the affectation of conscientiousness, men like Berkeley and Butler, who never stooped to solicit favour, were not forgotten.

Berkeley travelled much in the old world and in the new, where he resided for some years in the hope of being able to establish a mission in the Bermudas. Yet, in a sense, he lived a life apart from the world, absorbed in the pursuit of truth, his powers ever "firm to their mark, not spent on other things." Something of the recluse, it may be, is perceptible in the *Siris*, where the most abstruse speculations about the nature of the Deity are inextricably mingled with a persistent recommendation of the sovereign virtues of tar-water as a panacea. But there is no such element of weakness in his earlier performances. He combines the true speculative genius with a masterly common-sense, and the noblest moral ideals with a grasp of human nature which Mandeville might have coveted. His ethics, in particular, are meant to be translated into practice. He does not chop logic about conduct. His morality is that, not of a Sterne or a Rousseau, but, of a Hogarth and a Johnson.

His great doctrine.

The fundamental doctrine of Berkeley's system is the proposition that there is "no such thing as what philosophers call material substance." Nothing can be perceived except "ideas." I am not conscious either of the existence or of the essence of "matter." Retain that word, by all means, if you please, and apply it to the objects

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of sense, provided that you do not attribute to them any subsistence distinct from their being perceived. For inert and unperceiving things, to exist is to be perceived, and the objects of sense, when withdrawn from the range of our senses, can only be said to exist in so far as they are present to the perception of God. Thus, what we call the external world is merely a sort of divine language which has, or need have, no more connection with reality than a word has with the thing to which it is applied. "It is equivalent to a constant creation, betokening an immediate act of power and providence." It is "the sensible intervention of arbitrary [though not capricious] signs which have no similitude or connexion with the things signified."

These are hard sayings, and none the easier that they do no more than carry to their logical conclusion the apparently plain-sailing doctrines of Locke. Like almost all the English empiricists, Locke was unable or unwilling to see the drift of his own arguments. Berkeley's attack upon his distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of matter is, from Locke's point of view, unanswerable. Yet we may question whether Berkeley is as conclusive on the constructive as on the critical side. It has been wittily said that, when he has completely disproved the existence of matter, he has to fall back upon "regarding his Maker as a universal trustee to preserve contingent remainders."[1] From the modern point of view, however, the capital feature of his

[1] *Horæ Sabbaticæ*, vol. iii. p. 11.

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philosophy is his triumphant vindication of the unity and continuity of the percipient, intelligent, and conscious self. "I know, or am conscious of, my own being; and that I *myself* am not my ideas, but somewhat else —a thinking, active principle, that perceives, knows, wills, and operates about ideas. I know that I, one and the same self, perceive both colours and sounds; that a colour cannot perceive a sound nor a sound a colour; that I am therefore one individual principle, distinct from colour and sound; and, for the same reason, from all other sensible things and inert ideas." It was precisely this tenet which Hume selected as the main object of his attack when expounding the principles of scepticism.

Johnson, as every one remembers, refuted Berkeley's doctrines with "alacrity," by kicking his foot so hard against a stone that he rebounded from it; and the humblest pretender to philosophy can now refute the refutation. What concerns us here, however, is, not the validity of Berkeley's reasoning or the soundness of his principles, but, the exquisite style in which he clothed his thoughts. Hume had his perspicuity and a portion of his humour. Mr John Mill toiled after both, *longo intervallo*. But there are a sense of greatness, a subtlety, a charm about Berkeley to which almost all philosophers have been strangers except Plato. These qualities are particularly conspicuous in his dialogues, and most of all in the *Alciphron*, which, judged as pure literature, is probably his masterpiece. Our sensations in perusing it are identical with those of which we are conscious in

His style.

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reading the *Republic* or the *Phædo*. We know which side of the argument is destined to be successful; and we are fascinated as we watch the interlocutor who is doomed to failure driven irresistibly into making a fatal admission. In the little asides—in the touches of human nature and local colour—in the play of wit and fancy, the resemblance between Berkeley and Plato is particularly striking. The Irish prelate abounds in benignant but searching humour. Nothing could be better, for example, than his rallying of the fashionable atheist who makes a parade of appealing to reason, and when hard-pressed in the debate declares that a "scholastic accuracy" and a strict adherence to logic and the principles of argument are pedantic and unworthy of a well-bred man. It is interesting to note that his estimate of the intellectual abilities of the deists and sceptics is identical with Swift's. But his works are never disfigured by flippancy or ill-timed jesting. Dispensing with the aid of a severely technical vocabulary—and this, luckily for literature, the English philosophers of the eighteenth century were generally able to do—he expresses the most subtle, recondite, and complicated ideas with matchless lucidity and grace. He never perceptibly rejects the current idiom of his day, and yet, like Swift, he is so little antiquated in style and tone that, with the alteration of a single word here and a single phrase there, he can still be read without the reader being reminded of the length of time which separates his generation from ours. It may be that, to elicit the full meaning

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of his philosophy, it must be restated with the aid of a dialect which, to him, had sounded uncouth and incomprehensible. But, fortunately, so ungrateful a duty is well without our province.

Hume.

David Hume[1] (1711-1776) is by far the most formidable champion of the empirical, or rather sceptical, philosophy who has ever entered the lists of speculative controversy. He is one of those who, though but indifferently provided with this world's wealth, have deliberately turned their backs upon professional and commercial pursuits, and devoted themselves, heart and soul, to philosophy and literature. His friend and disciple, Adam Smith, regarded him as the ideal of a perfectly wise and virtuous man; nor can it be denied that in the conduct of his life he displayed much both of virtue and of wisdom. His strongest passion was, perhaps, the love of fame; its defect, an over-sensitive vanity, was his most strongly-marked foible. This weakness apart, contemporary testimony and his own letters alike proclaim him a just, benevolent, and self-respecting man, a trustworthy and constant friend, an amiable and entertaining companion. The even tenor of his placid existence, his cheerful fortitude, his firmness of purpose, are in pleasant contrast to the moody and agitated life, the self-inflicted torments, and the querulous craving for the unattainable, to be

[1] *Philosophical Works*, ed. Green and Grose, 4 vols., 1874-1875. *Treatise*, ed. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: 1896. *Enquiry*, ed. the same, 1894. *Life and Correspondence* by J. H. Burton, 2 vols., Edinburgh: 1846; *Hume*, by T. H. Huxley (English Men of Letters), 1879; *Scottish Philosophy*, by A. Seth, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: 1890.

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observed in the case of other philosophers of a less fortunate constitution. His brief *Autobiography*—a piece perfect in its kind, notwithstanding the faint strain of bravado which now and then makes itself perceptible—affords an almost unique illustration of that rare type of character in which the best points of the Stoic and the Epicurean are harmoniously intermingled.

Hume prosecuted his favourite studies with so much assiduity that before reaching the age of twenty-five he had completed the *Treatise of Human Nature*, of which the first two volumes were presented to the public in 1739, and the third in the following year. The *Essays, Moral and Political*, appeared in 1741 and 1742, the *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding* in 1748, and the *Enquiry concerning Principles of Morals* in 1751. The two last-named works are a modification of the *Treatise*, the ill success of which so mortified him that he virtually disowned it. Also, there is no doubt that, while eagerly desirous of provoking "bigots" and "enthusiasts" to anger, he was solicitous to state his opinions in the way which would bring him into least trouble. The *Political Discourses* were published in 1752, and they were followed by his *History of England* (1754-1762) and the *Natural History of Religion* (1757). The *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, though written nearly thirty years before, did not make their appearance until 1779. His work in the region of history and political philosophy will be referred to in its proper place. Here we deal with the metaphysician and the moralist.

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Hume took no active part in the mere squabbles, philosophical and theological, of his time. His eye rested chiefly upon Locke, Butler, and Berkeley. The first he accepts as the pioneer of all who deny that there is any element in knowledge which is not originally supplied by the senses. In his writings upon religion, again, he is constantly thinking of Butler, and it is to his address that he directs his well-known dilemma with regard to the likelihood of rewards and punishments in another world. But Berkeley was more vividly present to his mind than either Butler or Locke, and it would seem to be in Berkeley that he finds his true starting-point. As Berkeley had treated Locke, so Hume treated Berkeley. The latter had, so to say, "vanished" matter, and had sought the explanation of phenomena in mind. Hume went one step farther, and "vanished" mind as well.

His philosophy.

It is in virtue of his frank and powerful statement of the difficulties which confront the philosopher at the very outset that Hume may claim to be regarded as the parent of modern speculation; and it is not the least of his glories that he has boldly faced up to the sceptical conclusion. Most of his disciples have been too tender of the interests of natural science to accept it without a wry face. They have qualified a little here, and refined a little there, in a desperate effort to rehabilitate the relation of cause and effect. Not so Hume. "All knowledge," he announces boldly, "resolves itself into probability." "All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another, but we never can observe any tie

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between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected." Our knowledge of cause and effect springs solely from experience. But no argument from past experience will ever enable us to predict the future, for all such argument is based on the hypothesis that the future will resemble the past, and of that, experience can never assure us. Experience, in short, derives its validity not from reasoning, but merely from habit or custom, "the great guide of human life." The idea of cause and effect arises solely from "the customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant." If we believe that fire will burn or water refresh, it is not because we have gone through any valid process of inference, "'tis because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise."

Hume does not always remember this extreme position. He avails himself, for example, in the famous essay on *Miracles*, of the current sense of the expression, "laws of nature." Yet such deviations into a phraseology which implies reasoning on a solid foundation may be readily forgiven. When we compare his intrepid pursuit of the argument with the timidity of many subsequent empirics, his fearlessness of consequences with their nervous apprehensions, we have no alternative but to admire. He could contemplate the results of his labours with equanimity. Since reason proves incapable of dissipating the clouds of sceptical doubt, nature herself must be invoked for that purpose. A game of backgammon, and a few merry hours spent in congenial company, will presently compose the hurried spirits of the sceptic. "Careless-

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ness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy. For this reason I rely entirely upon them; and take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and an internal world."

In the treatment of morals, Hume's position may be described as that of a cautious and reasonable hedonist, who endeavours to provide a serviceable bridge over the gulf that separates *is* from *ought*. His limitations are tolerably obvious. He has no notion of a man's working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. The virtue which he recommends "talks not of useless austerities and rigours of suffering and self-denial." Her sole purpose is to make her votaries cheerful and happy, and the sole trouble she demands of them is that of "just calculation." This is not a very inspiring view to take of moral excellence. But at least Hume was not of those who endeavour to atone for the removal of a sanction by unrestricted indulgence in fine language to which the presence of that sanction alone can impart any real meaning. While he eschews the sly indecencies of Helvétius and the filth of Diderot, he has none of that intolerable gush about the beauties of virtue which formed part of the stock-in-trade of the ethical philosophers of his day.

His style.

Hume's style possesses in an exceptional degree the virtue of lucidity; and the most complicated ideas, under its influence, assume the appearance of plainness and simplicity. This perfection, however, was not attained without strenuous

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exertion. The *Treatise*, though in many ways his capital performance, is notably defective in that evenness of flow and delicacy of finish of which he was afterwards to learn the secret, and is even marred by passages of considerable obscurity. The effect of perfect composure and unruffled smoothness which he came to achieve was the offspring not of nature but of art, not of intuition but of industry. He rarely, if ever, attempts to be affecting or impressive, for he rarely permits himself to be carried away by emotion. Insolence and disdain he is not studious to conceal; but they are indicated less in tangible and specific phrases than by slight inflections of tone. The essay on *Miracles*, for example, despite its ostentatiously judicial pose, is saturated with a feeling of supreme contempt for the poor "zealots" whose eyes still require to be opened to the truth. Hume had too poor an opinion of his adversaries to waste time in invective, nor did he take pleasure in lashing the vices of the age. Yet a single sneer from him is more crushing than a torrent of denunciation from some one else; and, as a rule, he launches the most virulent sarcasms in so imperturbable and innocent a manner that a dull man may sometimes fail to take his meaning. His tone is that of one who, though far from disclaiming in the abstract a liability to succumb to the solicitations of passion, has, by the long practice of self-restraint, procured himself an almost absolute immunity from the risk of yielding to temptation. This temper of serene self-satisfaction and complacency may be highly distasteful to some persons, and can evoke enthusiasm

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in hardly any. But, whether we like it or not, Hume's position among the philosophers of the world was long since determined, and is too well-assured to be shaken by the fact that we could have wished him other than he was. With Scott and Burns he completes the trio of his countrymen who, judged by a standard more exacting than that of national partiality, are entitled to a place in the *corps d'élite* of literature.

That the human faculties are restricted to a comparatively narrow field of operation; that absolute certainty is rarely if ever attainable; and that probability is the very guide of life—these are propositions which seem entirely in accordance with the teaching of Hume. Yet their great upholder was one whose whole attitude towards morals and religion presents the strongest possible contrast to that of the chief of sceptics. From premises strikingly similar, Bishop Butler drew very different conclusions, and he based a cautious argument, designed to establish the probability of the truth of revealed religion, upon some of the most powerful considerations which had led Hume to the result that knowledge is impossible.

Butler.

Joseph Butler (1692-1752)[1] early displayed his aptitude for metaphysics in a correspondence with the celebrated Dr Samuel Clarke, who had demonstrated the being and attributes of God, and who, like Mr Square, was a profound believer in the eternal and immutable fitness of things. After taking orders, Butler became preacher at the Rolls Chapel, and the result of his labours there was a volume of *Sermons*

[1] *Works*, ed. Gladstone, 2 vols., Oxford: 1896.

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(1726). The seclusion of a country living enabled him in the following decade to compose *The Analogy of Religion, natural and revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736), which established his reputation upon a thoroughly solid basis. The dying wish of Queen Caroline procured for him the Bishopric of Bristol in 1738, and twelve years later he was translated to the see of Durham. His *Charge* (1751) to the clergy of that diocese is his only other published work of note, except a few sermons delivered upon special occasions.

The Sermons.

From the point of view of moral philosophy as a whole, Butler's *Sermons* are perhaps the most important of his writings. They contain a large substratum of positive ethical doctrine which will never lose its value, however fashion and vocabulary may change. The channels into which his thought naturally runs are those familiar to the polite and learned world of his own time. This accounts for the charge sometimes brought against him, of not venturing to stake his all upon transcendental principles, in his anxiety to show that religion and morality are "agreeable to reason." We may think that he spends too much time in demonstrating the exact coincidence of interest and duty, or in exhibiting the just balance between the various "affections, instincts, principles, and powers" which make up the sum of human nature. But we must remember, in the first place, that the view against which he chiefly waged war was that which made self-love the keystone of morality; and in the second place, that it was

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not Butler's habit to put his case too high. He has none of those rhetorical outbursts which are the privilege of the platform and the pulpit, but writes as a moralist and a student of human nature who has sat down to reflect "in a cool moment." Hence *meiosis* is a favourite figure of speech with him, and only a dullard will suppose that, when he opines that the character we call selfish is "not the most promising for happiness," he means to be lukewarm in his advocacy of self-denial. Had he felt it his duty to harangue or to declaim, his method had doubtless been different. But it could scarcely have been more apt to turn educated men to his own way of thinking than the grave and delicate irony which every now and then illuminates his pages.

Two or three points are prominent in Butler's constructive teaching. His psychology represents a great advance on that of most of his contemporaries, especially where he points out that the deliberate pursuit of pleasure defeats its own end. Again, the social character of his ethical system is very noticeable. Men are closely united to one another. He declines to discuss "the speculative absurdity of considering ourselves as single and independent." Once more, his doctrine of conscience has made an indelible mark on ethical speculation. His account of that faculty which, "had it strength as it has right, had it power as it has manifest authority, would absolutely govern the world," is much more satisfactory than any theory, however ingenious and refined, which reduces the moral judgment to a matter of "taste." But it is in the pro-

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found seriousness with which he addresses himself to his subject that we find the true secret of Butler's superiority to almost all of his contemporary rivals. Virtue captivates him, not because of its æsthetic or intellectual appeal, but, because of its supreme importance in the affairs of life. Knowledge is not our proper happiness. "The only knowledge which is of any avail to us is that which teaches us our duty or assists us in the discharge of it." "Our province is virtue, religion, life, and manners; the science of improving the temper and making the heart better." The "beauty" of morality, the judicious "calculation" involved in determining our proper course, alike disappear before the peremptory call of duty. There may be difficulties in practice as there are in speculation. Such problems are incident to the very notion of a state of discipline. But conscience will point out the right path to choose; for "that which is called considering our duty in a particular case is very often nothing but endeavouring to explain it away."

The Analogy.

To judge the *Analogy* fairly, it is imperative to have constant reference to the end it had in view. The deist controversy had been in progress for many years, and seemed likely to linger on with no conclusive result. Butler confounded the deists by pointing out that precisely the same objections could be urged against the God of nature as they themselves proponed against the God of revelation. It has never been seriously disputed that in this counter-attack Butler won a

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signal victory. The controversy flagged; and when the struggle began again the opponents of authority, like Conyers Middleton, were wise enough to take up far stronger positions than their predecessors had done. The complaint that Butler has not furnished a complete armoury for the defence of the faith against all possible antagonists is palpably unfair. He never proposed to himself a scheme which is almost certainly impracticable. His object was primarily to show that, given deist premises, deism was untenable. In the course of this demonstration he throws out many invaluable observations susceptible of a much wider application. But it is at natural, as opposed to revealed, religion that he aims his blow; and his arguments still seem valid against their proper object, whether in its state of primitive simplicity, or tricked out in the imposing robes of Teutonic philosophy.

His style.

Butler's style is singularly deficient in grace. He seems oppressed by the burden of his message; and his efforts to expound it are painful and even awkward. He lived in an age in which a certain measure of fluency and ease was at the command of almost every writer. The older English prose had finally disappeared with many virtues and with some faults. Butler neither revived the distinctive excellences of the seventeenth century nor shared those which had taken their place. He is harsh, clumsy, and involved; nor is it easy to think of any modern English writer of the first order whose style is quite so

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bald as his. Yet by means of some subtle and indefinable quality he rises superior to his defects. The unmelodious and stammering sentences soon begin to exercise a fascination equal to that of much more polished and attractive authors. He is remarkably persuasive, and every page bears the impress of manliness and honesty. Here is no trifler, arguing "for the fun of the thing." Here is no advocate engaged to plead a cause. But here is one whose unwavering purpose is to get into contact with realities. "Things and actions are what they are; and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why, then, should we desire to be deceived?" In that memorable sentence he strikes the keynote both of his character and of his achievement.

Johnson.

The equal of Butler in earnestness and grasp of practical morality—his unquestionable superior in the art of literary expression—Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)[1] dominated the English world of letters with so absolute a sway that the reaction against his despotism has only died out within a comparatively recent period. He comes before our humble tribunal in many capacities—as poet, dramatist, political pamphleteer, and critic. But it was in the character of a moralist that he was especially revered during the latter years of his life; and it was chiefly in the character of a moralist that he was

[1] *Works*, ed. Murphy, 12 vols., 1823. James Boswell, *Life*, ed. Hill, 6 vols., Oxford: 1887; ed. Morris, 1 vol., 1893; Leslie Stephen, *Johnson* (English Men of Letters), 1878.

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pressed, in and out of season, upon the notice of succeeding generations. We are, therefore, to make no apology for including him in the present chapter, though he was a philosopher in the literal rather than in the technical signification of the word, and though much of his philosophy must be sought in the pages of Boswell. Johnson's review of Soame Jenyns's *Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1757) has always been esteemed a masterpiece; and, apart altogether from its splendid vigour, it affords a convenient statement of the point of view from which the critic regarded such investigations. To agitate these questions, he seems to say, is but "to perplex the scrupulous and to shake the weak, to encourage impious presumption or stimulate idle curiosity." It is no disgrace to own the problems insoluble: "the shame is to impose words for ideas upon ourselves and others; to imagine that we are going forward when we are only turning round." He has no solution of his own to offer of the mystery of providence. He can only be silent and submit.

His "pessimism."

This strain of thought is sometimes characterised as gloomy, and Boswell obviously thought that any one of spirits less volatile than his own was in a fair way to qualify for Bedlam. There are those, however, to whom Johnson's mode of thinking appears infinitely less depressing than the heedless optimism of many of his contemporaries, or the more pretentious optimism of a later age, which professes to make the most cheerful deductions as to the condition of the universe from the circumstance that

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the lark is on high, or the blade dew-pearled. Gloomy or inspiriting, Johnson's views were essentially unaffected and sincere. He carried out to the full his emphatic exhortation to "clear the mind of cant." Speculation about difficulties which he knew to be insoluble had no charm for his masculine type of intellect; and he had as little belief in the analysis of action as in the analysis of thought. "It is difficult," he assures us, "to prove the principles of practice, because they have for the most part *not been discovered by investigation, but obtruded by experience.*" Here is the major part of the Johnsonian philosophy in a nutshell. Johnson found a medium for the promulgation of his views on life in the *Rambler* (1750-1752), the *Adventurer* (1752-1754), and the *Idler* (1758-1760). That his hand was too heavy for the sprightlier part of such work must be admitted. Judged by reference to an average standard, his delineation of character and criticism of manners might pass muster. Tried by comparison with the *Spectator*, they cannot be pronounced a success. Yet in the graver and more solemn passages, it may be questioned whether the palm does not rest with the later writer rather than with Addison. At all events, it is certain that whatever of excellence is to be found in the *Rambler* and the *Idler* was reproduced in a highly concentrated form in *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759), which Johnson dashed off in hot haste to meet the charges of his mother's funeral. There is one work with which, of course, *Rasselas* provokes instant comparison. *Candide* had

Rasselas.

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the start of it in the world by about a fortnight; and upon any view must be pronounced prior in merit as in time. But there are few more striking coincidences in literary history than the practically simultaneous publication of those two independent works upon the same theme and with practically the same moral, by two writers whose views upon religion were as different as their temperaments.

Rasselas is the only really successful experiment in the "conte philosophique" in English. That Johnson thought of placing his characters in Abyssinia may have been due to the fact that, a quarter of a century before, he had translated from the French a book of travels to that country. But if he had selected the steppes of Siberia or the South Sea Islands for his scene, it would have made no difference. To reproach him with anachronisms or inaccurate local colour, and to confront him with the narrative of Abyssinian Bruce, is as relevant as it would be to taunt Voltaire with his superficial knowledge of the manners and customs of Babylon or Egypt. The subject is Johnson's favourite topic, the "vanity of human wishes," the futility of the quest for happiness. Didactic in intention, the book is never dull. It is penetrated with a sane and delightful humour; it exposes a hundred fashionable sophistries; it inculcates an impregnable and enduring wisdom. And in one immortal passage, it shivers into a thousand fragments the barren systems of philosophy, with their high-sounding catchwords, of which Shaftesbury more than any other had taught

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the eighteenth century the trick. "'To live according to nature,'" explains the philosopher to the enquiring prince, "'is to act always with due regard to the fitness arising from the relations and qualities of causes and effects; to concur with the great and unchangeable scheme of universal felicity; to co-operate with the general disposition and tendency of the present system of things.' The prince soon found that he was one of the sages whom he should understand less as he heard him longer. He therefore bowed and was silent; and the philosopher, supposing him satisfied, and the rest vanquished, rose up and departed with the air of a man that had co-operated with the present system."

His style.

It is unnecessary to vindicate the qualities of Johnson's style, save against the pedants who form their opinion on such matters by casting up and comparing the number of words of Anglo-Saxon and of Latin origin which an author happens to employ. He must be judged neither by his *bonâ-fide* imitators, most of whom were stupid and unskilful, nor by his parodists, almost all of whom have been the reverse of felicitous. In sober truth, there is no more trenchant, vigorous, and idiomatic prose-writer in the language than he; none who so studiously shuns the otiose epithet, the false antithesis, the vain repetition. Johnson's great work, from a literary point of view, was the restoration to our literature of some of the forgotten possibilities of English prose. No one who has studied his writings with care, has marked his fas-

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tidious choice and effective marshalling of epithets, has noted the majestic roll of his sonorous periods, can help suspecting that to set down "whatever comes into one's head" is not perhaps, after all, the promising way to write well. Such faults as Johnson's methods were apt to beget, instead of becoming more marked as he grew older, were gradually toned down, until in the *Lives of the Poets* (1778-1780) we seem to see him in complete control of as noble an instrument as had been heard in England since the death of Milton. It would be ungracious and absurd to depreciate the inestimable services of those who modernised our prose, and to whom Johnson awarded such discriminating and generous praise. But to Johnson we owe the resuscitation of certain ingredients of style which were not only of high value in themselves, but were pregnant of benefit to subsequent generations. If in the nineteenth century there have been writers who proved that the resources of English prose were not yet exhausted, but, on the contrary, were susceptible of still further development, it will be found that most of them are the conscious or unconscious debtors of the great lexicographer.

In the controversies of the eighteenth century, as Locke was the mainspring of metaphysical, so was Shaftesbury the mainspring of ethical, speculation. His views were exposed to a twofold attack. On the one side they were assailed by those who ob-

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jected to his identification of the virtuous man with the virtuoso because it detracted from the absolute and immutable character of moral distinctions. This ground of objection was maintained by Dr Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) and William Wollaston (1659-1724), who have been referred to in the preceding volume of this series; and the succession of the "intellectualists," as they are called, was continued in the period with which we are dealing by John Balguy (1686-1748), who, besides a *Letter to a Deist concerning the Beauty of Moral Virtue* (1726), wrote the *Foundation of Moral Goodness* (1728-29), and by

Price.

Richard Price (1723-1791),[1] the last, but by no means the least, of this way of thinking. Price's reputation as a philosopher has, perhaps, been obscured by his success as a political pamphleteer; and it would be preposterous to assert that his *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* (1757) is a work of capital importance. But it is interesting as one of the last open attempts to re-establish a very old friend—the proposition, namely, that virtue is in the long-run identical with knowledge. Morality, in Price's view, consists of certain necessary truths which are apprehended by the intellect in the same way as the necessary truths of mathematics. The doctrine seems sufficiently barren and unprofitable in its crude form; but Price rendered undoubted service by running counter to the

[1] For Price and others after-mentioned, see, in addition to the works cited at the beginning of this chapter, Mr Selby-Bigge's selections from the *British Moralists*, 2 vols., Oxford: 1897.

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tendency of his age, and by seeking in reason, and not in some sense or passion, the specific faculty which dictates and criticises conduct.

On the other side, the doctrines of Shaftesbury were impugned with growing vigour by a body of thinkers who considered the conception of a "moral sense" to be unfounded and superfluous, and who preferred to bottom ethics wholly upon men's feelings of pleasure and pain. Abraham Tucker (1705-1774) boldly resolved morality into enlightened self-interest, though his word for the end at which all human action aims was "satisfaction," and not one recognised as distinctively hedonistic. His uncompleted *Light of Nature pursued* (1768-1778), on which he spent the last twenty years of his life, is a voluminous and discursive work, with the great merit of transparent sincerity. John Brown (1715-1766) was no less outspoken in proclaiming the relativity of morals. Virtue, he tells us in his *Essay on the Characteristics* (1751), is "the voluntary production of the greatest public happiness"; and actions must be judged, not upon their intrinsic quality (a meaningless phrase), but, by the ends at which they aim and the results which they produce. Brown is also noteworthy as one of the first to strike a discordant note in the chorus of optimism which had long risen from philosophic throats. In his *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757) he deplores the prevailing luxury of society, bewails the effeminacy of his countrymen, revels in the most dismal prognostications, and, in effect, delivers himself of one of those jeremiads about the

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degeneracy of the race without which the literature of no age would be complete. But his importance rather lies in the illustration he affords of the pressure brought to bear upon the æsthetic school of moralists from the utilitarian side—a pressure to which even its stoutest champions were fain to submit.

Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746)[1] was a native of the north of Ireland, who became Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow. The "moral sense" was the pivot upon which, following Shaftesbury, he made his ethical system revolve. But inasmuch as he held that the dictates of the moral sense coincide with the public good, and inasmuch as he emphasised that coincidence, he half-opened a door for the utilitarians which they were not slow to throw wider. His most elaborate work is his posthumous *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755), but the cardinal points in his doctrine — including the amazing idea of expressing moral truths in the formulæ of mathematics—are fully indicated in the *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), and an *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions* (1728). His successor in the professorial chair, Adam Smith (1723-1790), rejected the "moral sense," and assigned the chief part in the drama of ethics to "sympathy." He likewise displayed a more frankly utilitarian bias than Hutcheson. But they resemble one another in being extremely diffuse and voluble, full of a vague and unsatisfying eloquence, which is obviously in-

Hutcheson.

Smith.

[1] W. R. Scott, *Francis Hutcheson*, Cambridge: 1900.

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tended for the class-room. They are also alike in being fervent expositors of that easy-going optimism to which we have already had occasion to refer so often. By sedulously underestimating the strength of the human passions, as well as by coolly ignoring some of the facts of life, they evolved a conception of the universe much the same as that which cheered the heart of Dr Pangloss. Human life, in Hutcheson's opinion, was "universally eligible," despite the "melancholy declamations" of some good men; and in this matter Smith is quite at one with him. For the reader of the present day, neither the *System* nor the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) can be said to have much intrinsic value as a contribution to ethical speculation. He may smile at Hutcheson's vehement assertion of Whig principles and the right of resistance to rulers; and he may note with amazement the immeasurable gulf which separates the glib complacency of Smith from the weighty seriousness of Butler. But Adam Smith will be remembered for work of a very different order performed in another field of inquiry, and Hutcheson may perhaps survive in virtue of having suggested that most ambiguous of formulæ—"the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Historically, they are interesting as milestones on the road to hedonism, and deserve more attention than Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782). In addition to enriching the literature of his profession, exhibiting the *Elements of Criticism*, in three volumes (1762), and "subjecting agriculture to the test of rational principles," that

Lord Kames.

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eminent judge published a collection of *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751), which displays considerable acuteness. It is true that, in Hume's judgment, "a man might as well think of making a fine sauce by a mixture of wormwood and aloes as an agreeable composition by joining metaphysics and Scots law." But the analogy is hardly fair. The author, for example, is strong upon the distinct and specific character of the conception of moral obligation, and expresses himself with clearness and force. Yet in his psychology and his analysis of motive, it must be owned, we are not seldom conscious of that indescribable air of unreality and remoteness from solid fact which is so striking a characteristic in many of his contemporaries.

Hartley.

Of more consequence as a moral philosopher than either Adam Smith or Hutcheson was David Hartley (1705-1757), whose *Observations on Man* (1749) disclosed a theory of materialism not essentially dissimilar from that which Condillac was, almost simultaneously, promulgating in France. Thought and sensation were explained by him as functions of matter—mere "vibratiuncles," due to the divine impulse. From this point onwards Hartley parts company with the Frenchman, and insists upon interweaving his materialism, not only with optimistic deism, but even, with something not very unlike orthodox Christianity. He is remembered for his doctrine of the "association of ideas," which, in pretty much the same shape, continued to serve the English empiricists as their leading psychological principle

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until its modification by the hypothesis of evolution. For the rest, Hartley's style is clear, straightforward, and pleasant, though not free from blemishes such as the expression of metaphysical propositions by means of mathematical symbols.

This mania for applying the methods of mathematics to morality was adversely criticised by Thomas Reid[1] (1710-1796) in his earliest work—a paper published in the Transactions of the Royal Society for 1748. But Reid, who, after holding the chair of Philosophy in the King's College, Aberdeen, succeeded to Adam Smith's professorship in 1764, presently flew at higher game. In the very year of his translation to Glasgow appeared his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, which was an avowed attack upon the teaching of Hume. That great sceptic had not wanted for opponents, though the theological side of his work was more efficacious in drawing their fire than the metaphysical. While his *Treatise* had escaped condemnation, his essay *On Miracles* had provoked answers from William Adams, the Master of Pembroke College, Oxford, and from George Campbell, Principal of the Marischal College, Aberdeen—answers which, if not conclusive, were creditable performances enough. At a later date, Beattie's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (1770), directed against Hume, achieved immense popularity. But Reid's was the first serious attempt made in this country to grapple

Reid.

[1] *Works*, ed. Stewart, 4 vols., 1803; *Essays*, ed. Hamilton 1853. Seth, *Scottish Philosophy, ut sup.*

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with the sceptical philosophy as a whole, and to rear a new fabric on the site which Hume had so ruthlessly laid waste. Reid pursued his theme in the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) and the *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (1788); but his main contentions are sufficiently set forth in the *Inquiry*, which the later volumes amplify rather than improve upon.

Hostile philosophers have scoffed, and sympathetic philosophers have grieved, because Reid chose as his watchword so questionable a term as "Common Sense." His best apology lies in the fact that Hume himself suggested a resort to the verdict of the average man by confessing that, the moment he returned to society and active life, the sceptical speculations which darkened his solitary hours incontinently disappeared. Reid, in short, appeals to common experience for much the same purpose as Aristotle; nor can he be justly charged with misunderstanding the doctrines he impugns, as Johnson may with misapprehending Berkeley. He realised that Hume's philosophy involved the total negation of the possibility of knowledge; and, whatever his success as a constructive thinker, he at least comprehended that no system could be pieced together by human ingenuity out of the incoherent phenomena of sensation into which Hume had resolved all thought. No part of his teaching has more real and permanent value than that in which he emphasises the distinction between mere sensation and perception.

Reid's style unquestionably suffered from the

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atmosphere of the class-room. Yet he is less flowery and ornate, less voluble and discursive, than either of his predecessors, and, judged by the professorial standard of the last century, he contrives to make his ideas clear and intelligible without any great superfluity of words. If there are patent inconsistencies in his doctrine, many more eminent philosophers are obnoxious to the same charge. The "Scottish School" of philosophy, of which he is reckoned the founder, has practically ceased to exist. Nevertheless, Reid's contribution to the reconstruction of the philosophy of knowledge and conduct should not be lightly set aside; and there are certain aspects of the truth which not even Kant himself discerned more clearly or more perspicuously expressed than he.

Theologians.

To enumerate the English theological writers of the eighteenth century would be to fill many pages with the names of men now almost wholly forgotten — Foster, Conybeare, "fortemque Gyan, fortemque Cloanthum." Thomas Sherlock (1678-1761) deserves mention for his *Trial of the Witnesses* (1729), an ingenious piece of apologetics; and John Leland's *View of the principal Deistical Writers* (1754-1756) sums up the results of half a century of wrangling with considerable ability, though from the point of view of a confessed partisan. But three writers call for somewhat more of notice than a single sentence. These are Middleton, Law, and Warburton.

Conyers Middleton (1683-1750) was the last of the deists. He had contributed to the great dispute a

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Letter from Rome showing an exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism (1729), and had found himself embroiled on various pretexts with such redoubtable antagonists as Bentley and Waterland. As a priest in orders of the Church of England, he unquestionably aroused more animosity in the bosoms of the orthodox than persons less solemnly pledged to the maintenance of revealed religion. But he reserved his best to the very last, and his *Free Inquiry into the miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church* (1749) maps out the lines upon which the attack on revelation might be resumed after the failure of the earlier campaign with better hope of success. Middleton may thus be justly called the pioneer of the "historical" argument, which has proved so powerful an engine in the hands of subsequent inquirers. To general literature, his chief contribution was the *Life of Cicero* (1741), which in its day achieved a great, and not altogether undeserved, reputation. Middleton, indeed, was long reckoned a model of style; and if we cannot now rank him so high as his contemporaries were disposed to do, we must at least allow that he wrote with ease and propriety, eschewing spurious eloquence and tawdry ornament.

Middleton.

But he is not to be compared for vigour and effectiveness in controversy to William Law[1] (1686-1761), the strenuous champion of the High-Church party,

[1] The *Serious Call* has often been reprinted. The edition of Overton (1898) is useful, and his monograph, *William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic*, 1881, may also be consulted with profit.

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and the most curious figure in the intellectual and ecclesiastical life of his age. Gibbon, to whose father Law had acted as tutor, has paid a fine tribute to the sincerity of his beliefs and the consistency of his life; and, though in the heat of the struggle he laid about him with a will, none of his opponents ever ventured to assail his private character. His *Letters to the Bishop of Bangor* (1717), his *Remarks on the Fable of the Bees* (1724), and his *Case of Reason* (1732), are perhaps the best and liveliest examples of his controversial manner. But his fame rests chiefly upon the work pronounced by Johnson to be the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language—*A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728). Addressed to the professing Christian, and not to the professing sceptic, it plies him with every possible incentive to accommodate his conduct to his creed; and its effect upon contemporary religious thought can hardly be exaggerated. Wilberforce's *Practical View* is the only book of its class which can vie with it in popularity and influence, though in point of literary merit it is decidedly inferior—less various, and less abundant in resource. Rarely have powers usually dedicated to the amusement of mankind been more happily diverted to its edification than in the *Serious Call.* Law had a keen sense of humour, a remarkable gift of satire, and a thorough knowledge of human nature; and his gallery of portraits abounds in truth and spirit. Addison himself has scarcely done anything better than the characters of Flavia and Miranda, of

Law.

The Serious Call.

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Matilda and Cognatus. Towards the end of his life Law became more and more enveloped in mysticism. He spoke a language unintelligible to his own age, and, it may be suspected, unintelligible to sane men of all ages. Those who will may follow him in the hot pursuit of Jacob Behmen's theories. We are content to recall him as he was before (if we may change the metaphor) he had qualified the pure doctrine of the Church of England by the admixture of so intoxicating a drug.

Warburton.

If William Law was in almost every respect an ideal controversialist, William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester[1] (1698-1779), was all, pugnacity apart, that a controversialist ought not to be. More learned by Johnson's own admission than Johnson, he misapplied his knowledge so consistently that, instead of being a powerful and convincing reasoner, he only succeeded in becoming a proficient in "calling names." There was scarce a writer of his time, from Hume and Voltaire to Morgan and Chubb, whom he did not utterly "confute," but confutation with him meant little more than loading with abuse. His ponderous blows were distributed with admirable impartiality between atheists on the one hand and "enthusiasts" on the other; and he was equally in his element while scarifying Hume for believing too little and vilifying Wesley for believing too much. His most bitter quarrel was with Robert Lowth, Bishop of St David's (1710-1787); his most

[1] *Works*, 7 vols., 1788-1794. See also Pattison, *Essays*, *ut sup.*, vol. ii. p. 119.

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distinguished alliance was with Pope, whose *Essay on Man* he vindicated with all his usual misplaced ingenuity. The most astounding illustration, however, of his lack of judgment, his devotion to paradox, and his infallible instinct for seizing the wrong end of the stick, is furnished by his *Divine Legation of Moses* (1737-1741), which imposed upon the world for a good many years, but which it is now barely possible to take seriously. His proposition is, briefly, this, that the absence of all reference in the Pentateuch to an after-life with its attendant rewards and punishments, is in itself a "demonstration" of the truth of the Mosaic revelation. It is needless to inquire how far he succeeded in substantiating this whimsical contention. For the truth is that Warburton, in so far as he survives, does so by reason, not of his virtues, but, of his vices. His satellite, Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester (1720-1808), was a better writer, and produced at least one work superior to any performance of Warburton's. Yet who can doubt which is the more interesting of the two? Warburton is a "curiosity of literature." It is impossible to bear him serious ill-will, so bravely does he play his part of Captain Colepeper. He attracts our notice and piques our fancy for no better reason than that he was a bully, a ruffian, and a swashbuckler.

Religious literature.

In conclusion, we may glance at another kind of theological writing which enjoyed a wide popularity in its day. The religious revival, and the feelings of which it was the outcome, undoubtedly stimulated the production of books, not so

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much of devotion, as of exhortation. The sermon as a department of literature, or at least as a branch of publication, had never gone out of fashion; and the reawakening of religious sentiment gave it a new lease of life. Every clergyman with any tincture of learning or politeness lived in hopes of falling in with a bookseller sufficiently far-seeing to give his discourses to the public. The grand traditions of the English pulpit, indeed, had for the most part been discarded, and had been replaced by very different conventions, excellently adapted to a more prosaic and sophisticated audience. But with whatever power the endless series of sermons, reflections, and meditations may have appealed to the original readers, few of them evoke a responsive emotion at the present day. As favourable a specimen of the better sort as another is supplied by *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745), by Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), an amiable and pious dissenter, whose *Family and Closet Expositor* (1739-1756) once occupied an honoured place in every respectable library, and whose *Life of Colonel James Gardiner* (1747) is extremely quaint and interesting.

It sometimes, however, happens that inferior works are more representative and informing than those of greater intrinsic excellence, and three books may be mentioned whose vogue is to us inexplicable, but which throw a strong light upon current manners and modes of feeling. The worst of these is James Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs* (1745-1747), of which the matter is almost invariably common-

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place, and the style execrable. Nowhere else is the trick of periphrasis so grossly abused — that periphrasis, borrowed by the prose-writers from the poets, which transforms a bird into a "feathered rover," and the human eye into a "rolling sparkler." To read the *Meditations*, in effect, is merely to be reminded of Mr Pecksniff in his loftiest and most imposing moments. James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1765), if less radically vicious in manner, are, none the less, astounding rubbish. Addressed to "young persons in genteel life," and published out of "an unfeigned regard for the female sex," they administer a great deal of sound advice in pompous language, interspersed with suitable apostrophes now to the Deity, now to the preacher's "fair auditory," now to the abstract virtues, and now to "ye chaste stars that with innumerable eyes inspect the midnight behaviour of mortals." Lastly, we strike once more the Scots academic trail in Hugh Blair (1718-1800), whose *Sermons*, published in 1770 and at intervals until 1801, were for long esteemed choice models of correct and elegant writing. What Johnson saw fit to praise, none should make haste to condemn; and perhaps too many hard things have been said of the worthy professor, who at his worst never sinks to the lowest deeps of Hervey. But his thought is shallow and unfruitful; his style is laboured and artificial; and the *Sermons* are throughout disfigured by the unmistakable stamp of "rhetoric and belles lettres."

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Bad as these works are, both absolutely and comparatively, much, as we have hinted, may be gleaned from them. We catch glimpses of ideas, in their rudimentary shape, working blindly in men's minds, and awaiting only the arrival of a man of genius to find adequate expression and the opportunity of development. In Hervey, for example, we may note a genuine appreciation of natural beauty, carefully disguised in a stilted and ungraceful dialect. From Fordyce we learn that the country is the abode of simplicity and innocence, and that "all the corruption and futility of the times is concentred in the metropolis." Other instances may readily be found. Finally, in justice to such eminently respectable divines, we shall do well to reflect that, if we can find little to praise in their most ambitious and applauded efforts, posterity is not unlikely to visit the popular religious literature of our own age with at least as great a measure of severity as has been meted out to them.

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CHAPTER IV.

PROSE FICTION.

THE NOVEL—ROMANCE—THE 'CARACTÈRE'—THE 'MÉMOIRE'—REALISM—THE MORAL AIM—LE SAGE—HIS 'DIABLE BOITEUX'—HIS 'GIL BLAS'—HIS VIEW OF LIFE—MARIVAUX—HIS BAD POINTS—THE CHARACTER OF MARIANNE—HIS MORAL TONE—PRÉVOST—HIS TRANSLATIONS—HIS OWN WORKS—'MANON LESCAUT'—DEFOE—'ROBINSON CRUSOE'—HIS METHOD—HIS OTHER WORKS—HIS INSTINCT FOR BUSINESS—RICHARDSON—'PAMELA'—'GRANDISON'—'CLARISSA'—ITS SURPASSING MERITS—FIELDING—HIS ART—HIS TYPES—'TOM JONES'—SMOLLETT—HIS PICARESQUE NOVELS—'HUMPHREY CLINKER'—GOLDSMITH—HIS STYLE—'THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD'—STERNE—HIS SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS RESULTS—HIS HUMOUR—MINOR FICTION—SENTIMENT AND LICENCE—THE 'ROMAN À CLEF'—'THE FOOL OF QUALITY'—'JOHN BUNCLE'—CONCLUSION.

The Novel.

IT has already been said that the great and special gift made to literature by our period was the novel.[1] That form of literary art assuredly did not spring full-grown from the brain of any one ingenious inventor. Surprising inventions of this kind are rare in the history of literature. What

[1] See particularly Brunetière, *Études*, 3rd ser.; arts. Le Sage, Marivaux, Rousseau; and Raleigh, *The English Novel*, 1894. Consult also Dunlop, *History of Prose Fiction*, new ed., 1888.

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Le Sage did (and Le Sage is the true father of modern fiction) was to avail himself of a mass of existing materials, and by dexterous handling to transmute them into a something possessed of unbounded vitality, and quite distinct in character and flavour from any one of the individual ingredients. No one, of course, would contend that every novel written since 1715 is the precise counterpart of *Gil Blas*. But whereas, before Le Sage's day, there were *contes* which needed only a little expansion and a little psychology; romances which needed only a little compression and a little common sense; strings of adventures which needed only a little human nature and a little human kindness; collections of character-sketches which needed only a connecting thread of plot; to become tolerable novels, —when you reach *Gil Blas* you know that here is, not merely an adumbration or suggestion of the novel, but, the novel itself.

Among the predecessors of the novel proper must first be named, *honoris causâ*, the "heroic" romance — which was already moribund at the close of the seventeenth century, though it maintained a certain hold upon the public for a good many years longer. The last great example of the class was the *Clélie* (1660) of Mlle. de Scudéry; and Mme. de la Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1677) where its *longueurs* were retrenched and its exuberances pruned, shows that an alteration in the original type had become inevitable some time before the century ended. The chief legacies of the old-fash-

Romance.

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ioned romance to modern fiction were its length and the "story-within-the-story." As regards the former, readers had grown accustomed to getting much for their money, and the novelists were not the men to baulk them of their fancy. Marivaux, Prévost, and Richardson, in particular, gave their public good measure pressed down and running over. As regards the latter, it may be supposed that the convention was originally adopted to give to a monotonous narrative some of the variety of a collection of *contes*. However welcome in the romance, it was a provoking excrescence in the novel. It interrupted the continuity of the fable, and served less as a relief than as a distraction. Considering these manifest drawbacks, its protracted survival is remarkable. Le Sage, Marivaux, and Prévost all employ it. Fielding uses it, for the most part sparingly except in *Amelia*, and Smollett freely. Even in so short a work as the *Vicar of Wakefield*, Goldsmith does not avoid it. Rejected in the main by Scott, it was resuscitated for a little by Dickens; and probably *Nicholas Nickleby* is the last instance in England of a novel from a really eminent hand in which it finds a place.[1]

The "Caractère."

A much more important contribution to the development of the novel was supplied in France by La Bruyère's *Caractères*, in England by the work of Steele and Addison. Hence came the criticism of manners, and the more minute and

[1] See *The Seven Sisters of York*, told at the inn when the coach has been "snowed up."

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accurate delineation of character. La Bruyère's rich vein of satire is shared by Le Sage, whose explicit disclaimer of having drawn from the life is perhaps, as in Smollett's case, the most convincing evidence of the fact. Indeed, the strenuous attempt to paint human beings in their actual surroundings was common to all who practised the new prose fiction. Moreover, the latter part of the seventeenth, and the earlier years of the eighteenth, century witnessed in France the production of countless Memoirs, which formed a happy medium for disseminating scandalous anecdote, alleged to be strictly true.

The "Mémoire."

A favourable specimen of this kind of work, such as the *Mémoires du Chevalier de Grammont* (1713), set an admirable example of vivacious narrative; while the characteristic seasoning could be easily added in greater or less quantities, according to the predilection of the writer or the supposed taste of the reader. It is not improbably due to the example of such performances that Le Sage, to say nothing of Marivaux and Prévost, cast their narratives in the first person; and that, after all, is not merely the most natural way of telling a story, but the one to which it is easiest to impart a tolerable air of verisimilitude.

The demand which brought the modern novel into being, or, at all events, the demand which its originators proposed to meet, was a demand for the realistic presentation of life and manners. We have Le Sage's word for it that his only design was to represent the life of men as it is. Defoe and

Realism.

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Richardson tortured their ingenuity in concocting circumstantial evidence, so to speak, of the veracity of their fiction. Nor were Marivaux and Prévost behindhand in this affectation of telling the truth. The story which they offer to the public came from the repositories of some one deceased, or was communicated to them in confidence by a friend, or was contained in a manuscript discovered by mere accident in some ancient castle. Nay, Marivaux, of all people, makes Marianne repudiate the intention of composing a book, and announce that she writes without premeditation: "Je vais comme je puis." Fielding is more sophisticated than his rivals, and such artless expedients are not for him. He has no scruples about discussing the canons of "the new province of writing" which he flatters himself he has discovered, but he is never tired of referring us for confirmation to the "book of nature," or of claiming superiority to others on the strength of his closer rendering of its contents. This conscious striving after realism operates to some extent upon plot. Hairbreadth escapes must be kept within the bounds of human probability. But it operates even more strongly upon character. The personages need no longer belong to the most elevated ranks of society. On the contrary—thanks here also to the influence of the "picaresque" novel, and to the example of the comic stage—all sorts of "low" characters may be introduced; and introduced they are — lawyers, surgeons, shopkeepers, innkeepers, hostlers, lackeys, sharpers, bullies, footpads, brigands, prostitutes, and pimps. This extension of the circle from which his

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characters might be drawn furnished the novelist with an immense supply of practically fresh material. But, as he was not to be confined to the narrow territory of the nobly-born on the one side, so he must not trespass upon the region of burlesque or caricature on the other. Hence it seems open to doubt if we should place the class of work represented by Furetière's *Roman Bourgeois* (1666) in the direct line of ascent from the novel. True, it deals with "low life," but it deals with it, as has been well pointed out, in the grotesque, rather than in what Fielding would call the true "comic," manner.

The moral aim.

One other characteristic shared by the novelists of our period is perhaps a consequence of this fervent zeal for fact. They nearly all profess to have a high moral aim. Le Sage and Marivaux, Richardson and Smollett, all claim to be thought instructive and edifying; nor need we examine too closely the soundness of their contention. It is enough to note that the contention was put forward, and that, if their morality had been in any wise impugned, the writers we have named would have been bound to repudiate the well-known line of defence which Charles Lamb urged on behalf of the "Restoration" dramatists. In any case, they were sufficiently conversant with their craft to make the drift of their "message" or teaching a wholly subordinate consideration in the actual composition of their works. Their practice illustrated the remark of Scott, that "the professed moral of a piece is like the mendicant who cripples after some splendid and

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gay procession, and in vain solicits the attention of those who have been gazing upon it."

Le Sage.

The life of Alain-René Le Sage[1] (1668-1747) was as devoid of adventure or incident as it was free from reproach. He practised the domestic virtues; supported a wife and family by means of his pen; and was by preference less dependent on the favour of the great than any other contemporary man of letters. Yet there was one patron to whom he owed not a little. The Abbé de Lionne not only bestowed on him a pension but gave him the run of his library. It was there that Le Sage formed that intimate acquaintance with Spanish literature which made him select Spain (a country he never visited) as the scene of his principal works. *Les aventures du chevalier de Beauchesne* (1732) is written in the true picaresque strain—cruel, callous, and cynical. The history of *Guzman d'Alfarache* (1732) is no more than his version of a story long before made famous by Mateo Aleman of Seville. Even in his more important writings, the surroundings, the names of places, and the multitudinous details, are taken faithfully from the Spanish theatre and the picaresque novel. He is probably guilty of no such blunders or solecisms as an Englishman of the present day would commit in a novel professing to deal with Scotland, or a Scotsman in a novel professing

[1] *Œuvres*, 1 vol., Firmin-Didot, 1840. His chief works have been frequently reprinted and are readily accessible. E. Lintilhac, *Le Sage* (G.E.F.), 1893.

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to deal with Devonshire. But the "local colour," if correct, is faint; and Le Sage himself makes no pretence that his characters belong distinctively to the Peninsula. "On voit partout les mêmes originaux"; and he was a firm believer in the principle that human nature is everywhere fundamentally identical.

His Diable Boiteux.

Le Sage's first great success was won with the *Diable Boiteux* (1707), the idea of which, but not much more, he appropriated from the *Diablo Cojuelo* of Luis de Guevara. It illustrates a literary convention precisely the converse of the "story-within-the-story." The latter consists in diversifying the main plot of your novel by the introduction of tales more or less irrelevant. The former consists in grouping together a number of independent tales in a slight framework more or less ingenious. The setting is wholly artificial, and subsidiary in importance to what it holds; but it affords opportunities for pleasantry and the exercise of a quaint fancy. The *Arabian Nights* and the *Decameron* are the most famous examples of this artifice, which is really exhibited in Crébillon's *Sopha* and in Johnstone's *Chrysal*, and nominally in the *Tales of my Landlord* and the *Chronicles of the Canongate*. Its last serious appearance in this country was in the Christmas numbers of Mr Dickens's periodicals. But it has practically been discarded on both sides of the Channel, the covers of a book being now considered a sufficiently strong bond for any collection of disconnected narratives. Le Sage, no doubt, found the method a convenient one; at all events he reverted to

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it in the *Valise Trouvée* (1740), though the mechanism of the earlier work is less commonplace. For this he can be neither praised nor blamed; but the substance and the style of the *Diable Boiteux*, which is singularly gay and entertaining, are emphatically his own. Here we have Le Sage's characteristic qualities: distinctness of vision, shrewdness of perception, penetrating wit, a firm touch, a precise and unambiguous utterance.

In 1709 Le Sage put upon the boards his *Turcaret*, which has been noticed in the immediately preceding volume of this series. The angry passions roused by this intrepid attack on the world of finance brought about his divorce from the Comédie Française. Henceforth his theatrical pieces were comparative trifles. But the drama's loss was the novel's gain. He found the *novela de Pícaros* ready to his hand, seized upon it, stripped it of its squalor and brutality, arrayed it in the garb of decency and good humour—in a word, made it human—and the result was *Gil Blas*.

His Gil Blas.

Indisputably superior alike to those of his works we have already named and to the *Bachelier de Salamanque* (1736), it has for more than a century and a half been recognised as one of the great novels of the world, though the judgments of criticism have not always been discriminating or harmonious. For no better reason, probably, than that the background of both is Spanish, it was for long customary to bracket it with *Don Quixote*, though no two works could be less susceptible of profitable comparison. Then, again, the critics are not agreed as to whether the fable of *Gil Blas* is well

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or ill constructed. When a work of this nature is published in three instalments, with an interval of a decade, less or more, between each (1715-1724-1735), there is certainly *primâ facie* ground for supposing that the author started upon no settled plan, but merely accumulated incident upon incident according to the promptings of his imagination. We should expect to find the plot of *Gil Blas* loosely knit, with more of sequence in it than of causation. Yet the book discloses a real unity and completeness far beyond anything that could have been anticipated from such hand-to-mouth methods. What though the episodes follow one another at haphazard and appear to be adjusted to no great end? Do they not arrange themselves in proper perspective, and have we not here the very epic of roguery, the *Odyssey* of rascaldom? On this very point, indeed, certain critics have mounted their high horse, and condemned the book on moral grounds, the hero being confessedly a scamp, a frequenter of taverns, and a keeper of low company.

This judgment would appear to be singularly wrong-headed. Gil Blas is not an exemplary personage.

His view of life.

His adventures bring us acquainted with no such models of manly perfection as Sir Charles Grandison, no such paragons of female virtue as Pamela or Marianne. But the invigorating breeze of satire blows keenly through all Le Sage's pages, and effectually purifies the atmosphere. He never by tone or manner makes himself privy to the peccadilloes of his evil-doers. He has a not unkindly smile for the weaknesses of his fellow

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mortals, but he never leers or sniggers at their *polissonneries*. He is always *bon enfant:* never arch and knowing; only amused and wise. Smollett, it is true, takes him to task for "preventing that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world." But one of the secrets of Le Sage's strength lies in this very attitude of detachment. Without assuming airs of superiority, he contemplates the comedy of the world with invincible good-humour, and leaves railing to others. In this frame of mind we see a link which attaches Le Sage more closely to the preceding age than to that of his middle and declining years. He confronts life, as he confronts letters, with a bearing essentially classic. His style is rigorously severe and simple; too much so, some have thought, to preserve the illusion of being natural. But it is exquisitely clear and pointed; clean-cut, and free from all preciosity or affectation, which he abhorred. There is no under-current of suggestion in his manner, just as in his matter there is no hint of the sentimental or the romantic. Love plays a very insignificant part in *Gil Blas*. The characters stand out in sharp relief, each distinctly realised, each vividly presented. But there is no probing of the heart, no tampering with the nerves, and no more "psychology" than is absolutely indispensable. In this sense, though in no other, his method may be described as "superficial"; and if we desire, not merely the vivid portrayal of character, but also, the subtle analysis of emotion, not merely the cool and impartial

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dexterity of the skilled craftsman, but also, the mysterious and indefinable quality generally known as "temperament," we must take our custom to a very different market, and examine the wares of Marivaux.

Marivaux.

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux[1] (1688-1763) began his literary career with three works, of which two were imitations of the "heroic" romance, and the third a specimen of the romance of adventure. All have sunk into richly deserved oblivion, along with his two foolish travesties of Homer and Fénelon. At various dates in his life he inclined towards journalism, contributing to the *Mercure*, and conducting, first, the *Spectateur français* (1722-23), and, later on, the *Cabinet philosophique* (1734). His true bias, however, lay in the direction of the drama, his principal contributions to which are duly discussed in their proper place. Here we consider him as the author of *La vie de Marianne* (1731-41), and *Le paysan parvenu* (1735-36), both works of considerable length, and neither of them completed.

His bad points.

Marivaux is at times an extremely tedious author, and if he can contrive to express or (for choice) to obscure his meaning in three sentences in place of one, so much the better. His style is anything but plain-sailing, for his is the high distinction of having stood godfather to a new species

[1] *Œuvres*, 12 vols., 1781. *Marianne* is readily accessible, and so are the best of his plays. Fleury, *Marivaux et le Marivaudage*, 1881; Larroumet, *Marivaux, sa vie et ses œuvres*, 1882; Deschamps, *Marivaux* (G.E.F.), 1897.

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of euphuism, which is not to everybody's mind. "Marivaudage" was far from popular with certain persons in his own day, when Prévost attacked, and Crébillon *fils* mimicked, it. Once more, even an enthusiastic amateur of psychology might be forgiven for considering his subtlety excessive. He splits straws with amazing gusto; and no possible or probable thought of his heroine is sacred from his watchful observation. Yet it would be absurd to deny that Marivaux is apt to exercise a sort of fascination over the reader who has once got fairly under way. He had an admirable eye for character, and was not afraid to go for it to common life. His M. de Climal, in *Marianne*, is admitted to be excellent, and even better are the personages in a much lowlier sphere. In dealing with them — and Mme. Dutour, who kept the linen-shop, may be taken as typical of them — the firmness of his outline is never once impaired by his love for refining and taking distinctions.[1]

The character of Marianne.

The true disciple of Marivaux, however, would probably contend that, in order adequately to test the master's merits, the character of Marianne herself must be consulted. Few more careful and elaborate delineations of the human heart have ever been attempted. Every thought of her brain, every quiver of her nerves, is faithfully chronicled. She records with grave particularity "tout ce qui passe" in her mind, and notes every "mouvement"

[1] The "flyting" of Madame and the driver of the *fiacre*, about the amount of Marianne's fare, is one of his best known scenes, and could scarce be improved upon.

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of her own or of other people. As a *tour de force*, Marivaux's work is astonishing, but it is more than a *tour de force*. The type of character portrayed is far, it may be, from an attractive one. Marianne has a "bon cœur" and a large supply of "sentiment." Everything that happens "penetrates" her, and the tear of "sensibility" gushes from her eyes on very slight provocation. She is, in short, a coquette, and even a minx. It may be doubted whether, weighed in the moral balance, she is at all preferable to the shameless and straightforward Manon Lescaut. Des Grieux's mistress was, at all events, candid, and pretended to be no better than she was. Marianne, on the contrary, wishes for nothing better than to have "le profit immodeste," while preserving "tout le mérite de la modestie." Yet with a multitude of odious faults, and despite an incurable long-windedness, the creature inspires a lively interest, and insensibly leads us on to the end of her all but interminable confessions. Marianne, in truth, represents an abiding type; and she may claim for herself the glory of being the precursor of the horde of Julies, *femmes incomprises*, new women, *psychologues*, and other female self-tormentors, no matter what their designation, who have since invaded and occupied so large a territory in the realm of fiction.

His moral tone.

While the merits of *Marianne* reappear in the *Paysan parvenu*—an eighteenth century *Bel Ami*, as it has been happily termed—one of its faults is there reproduced on an exaggerated scale. The atmosphere which in *Marianne* is at

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times enervating and unwholesome enough, becomes in the *Paysan* impregnated with the taint of moral decay. Marivaux illustrates more clearly than any other writer prior to Rousseau the ease with which sensibility could glide into corruption. He is not *grossier*, and indeed disapproved of such clumsy methods. "Un lecteur veut être ménagé," is his sly maxim. But he reflects the tone of the company with which he was in the habit of associating in the salons; and there the unsavoury combination of sensualism with *sensiblerie*, which tends to emerge in every age, was about to obtain an unprecedented and unparalleled ascendancy.

Prévost.

The last of the trio of great French novelists with whom we have to do (for consideration of the fiction of Diderot and Rousseau is reserved for the next volume) is Antoine François Prévost d'Exiles[1] (1697-1763), who spent the greater part of a troubled and melancholy life in vacillating between the cloister and the camp. Having made his peace with the Church and secured a patron, he passed his closing years in comparative peace and comfort. A shocking story as to the manner of his death long enjoyed a currency to which the evidence in its favour by no means entitled it; and his private character has not been too leniently dealt with by fame. Apart, however, from an almost total want of self-

[1] *Œuvres*, 39 vols., 1783-85. *Manon Lescaut* has been frequently reprinted and is readily accessible. Harrisse, *L'Abbé Prévost, histoire de sa vie et ses œuvres*, 1896; Schroeder, *L'Abbé Prévost—sa vie, ses romans*, 1898.

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control, and a fatal susceptibility to the passions, he was a sufficiently worthy and amiable man. Radically vicious or depraved he assuredly was not; while of his industry there can be no question.

During one of his periodical sojourns in a monastery he rendered some assistance towards the compilation of *Gallia Christiana*. But lighter themes presently occupied his pen. His first novel, *Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité* (1728-1731), was followed by a pretended sequel, but in reality an independent piece, the *Histoire de Manon Lescaut et du chevalier Des Grieux* (1731), upon which his reputation as a novelist now wholly depends. To this succeeded *Le philosophe Anglais ou mémoires de Cleveland* (1731-1738), which was immediately translated into English, *Le doyen de Killerine* (1735-1740), *L'histoire d'une Grecque moderne* (1740), and the *Campagnes philosophiques* (1741); while the list of his works is still further swollen by quasi-historical novels, of which *Guillaume le Conquérant* (1742) may serve as a sample. He had in the meanwhile resided for two different periods of some duration in England, for which country he conceived a profound admiration, and where he not only imbibed deistical opinions, but, what is far more surprising, learned to appreciate Shakespeare. Stimulated, no doubt, by the sight of the journalistic activity which the *Spectator* had originated, he started in 1733 *Le pour et le contre*, a weekly miscellany in which criticism was blended with a multitude of other topics. It lived until 1740, and Prévost desisted from editorial work for fifteen

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years, when for a few months he conducted the *Journal étranger*, a periodical which loudly sounded the note of European "solidarity" in literature and civilisation.

His translations.

The remainder of Prévost's busy life was filled up by the task of translation from the English, one of his heaviest undertakings in this department being a collection of voyages in seven volumes, which he supplemented by ten others of his own. It was he who introduced Hume, Conyers Middleton, and Richardson to the French reader; and he had the mortification of seeing the fame of the author of *Cleveland* eclipsed by that of the translator of *Clarissa*. In this humbler capacity Prévost was the means of bringing to bear upon his countrymen a more potent influence than he ever exercised on his own account, but Richardson's works undoubtedly owed something of their vogue in France to having been translated by one who had already made a considerable reputation for himself as an original novelist. It has even been suggested that, had Fielding fallen into the hands of Prévost instead of into those of La Place, *Tom Jones* would have left an abiding mark upon French literature. We may think such a conjecture exceedingly improbable without desiring in the least to make little of the usefulness of Prévost's labours. But for them, indeed, Diderot, Rousseau, and their disciples in fiction, had missed their most copious source of inspiration.

Prévost's own works, with one signal exception,

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have sunk into almost total oblivion. To resuscitate his historical novels, the method of which is borrowed from the real or pretended *Mémoires* to which allusion has been made, would be impossible. To revive in part his novels of adventure by means of judiciously-chosen extracts should be a more feasible project, for thus their most obvious defects could be eliminated. They are extremely long, extremely loose in construction, and extremely rich in what can only be called preaching. Prévost is always inclined to cast back to the type of *Télémaque*. Also, the characters are prone to weep for very little. The whole idea of the *Grecque Moderne* turns upon a piece of thoroughly false delicacy—a fantastic perversion of female modesty—which Saint-Pierre's Virginie might have approved and imitated, but which to the more robust intellect of a Le Sage or a Fielding would have seemed merely ridiculous and disgusting. Yet are there compensations. The "sombre coloris," which Rousseau justly noted as characteristic of Prévost, is not unattractive. It is interesting to watch the creature of gloom—the victim of destiny—the being marked by melancholy for her own—appearing for positively the first time as the hero of a novel. And while we find this distinct foreshadowing of the Byronesque, there are also unmistakable premonitions of the kind of fiction identified with the name of Mrs Radcliffe; for Prévost had some appreciation of the value of horror as an element in his art. Add to this, that his works have a certain air of straightforwardness

His own works.

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and sincerity, which is accurately reflected in a plain and unaffected style.

But half-hearted must become whole-hearted praise when the critic approaches the slender volume of two hundred and fifty pages which contains Prévost's masterpiece. In *Manon Lescaut* all his faults seem to have vanished, and all his excellences shine with redoubled splendour. The story is a simple one; its theme the blind devotion of a young fellow of good family to a lovely, wayward, and unfaithful mistress. Prévost's mode of presenting the emotion of love is very different from Marivaux's. Marivaux displays extraordinary patience in unravelling the tangled threads of feeling which make up the fabric of passion. Prévost concerns himself, not with the constituent parts, but, with the result. He regards love as a fatal obsession, whose influence, once insinuated, it is hopeless to think of resisting. This is the lesson which *Manon* inculcates, and whether the manner of conveying it be well calculated to deter the young from emulating the infatuation of the hapless pair we need not now determine. All the minor characters are good; none better than Manon's brother. But they are kept in strict subordination to the hero and heroine. No competent judge can fail to admire the masterly skill with which Des Grieux is portrayed, or the sheer force of simplicity and candour, in virtue of which an eagerness to forgive and forget, which would be ludicrous in a husband, is made to appear amiable and meritorious in a lover. Never-

Manon Lescaut.

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theless, it is Manon herself who is the crowning glory of the book. The type of woman who, with no inherent constitutional impulse to infidelity, is yet unable to remain faithful when faithfulness means poverty and discomfort, has been set down here once for all; and no later novelist has been able to add one essential stroke to the picture.

Before proceeding to discuss the great novelist who, through Prévost's instrumentality, gave so marked a direction to French fiction, we must pause to notice one who stands outside the main line of development followed by the English novel,[1] but stripped of whose works our literature would be perceptibly the poorer. The singular career of Daniel Defoe[2] (1659-1731) is one long series of petty mysteries, the elucidation of which has practically become a specialised branch of literary research. It is no business of ours to follow the windings of this arrant double-dealer; and his political tracts have been already dealt with in a former volume of this series. We take him up at the point in his life at which, some years after mystifying the public with the *Apparition of Mrs*

Defoe.

[1] By far the best criticism of the eighteenth-century novelists will be found in the prefatory notices contributed by Scott to Ballantyne's *Novelists' Library*, 10 vols., 1821-1825, and reprinted in Scott's *Misc. Prose Works*, 1848, vols. iii. and iv. Thackeray's *Humourists*, brilliant in some parts, is far from satisfactory in others.

[2] *Romances, &c.*, ed. Aitken, 16 vols., 1895; Lee, *Life*, 3 vols., 1869; Minto, *Defoe* (E.M.L.), 1879; Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, 3 vols., 1892, vol. i.

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Veal (1705), he won for himself an assured immortality by publishing *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). If the test, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, can legitimately be applied to literature, no work will emerge more triumphantly from the ordeal of criticism. It has been translated into every civilised, and into more than one barbarous, tongue. It has had hundreds of imitators of varying degrees of merit.[1] It captivated Rousseau (who saw in Robinson the image of the natural man) to that extent that he sanctioned its perusal by the young; and the book has been almost as familiar a friend in French as in British households ever since.

Robinson Crusoe.

Robinson Crusoe is a plain tale of adventure told by a plain man to plain people. The situation is novel and curious; and, instead of being ruined by picturesque language, it is unfolded to the greatest possible advantage in the most prosaic possible manner. How far Defoe was in the habit of drawing for supplies upon the records of actual occurrences is a vexed question. The preponderating belief among experts seems to be that he incorporated much more solid fact in most of his writings than used to be supposed. But no *bonâ-fide* narrative ever showed the multiplicity of detail in which Defoe indulges, or produced so vivid an illusion of absolute

His method.

[1] *Philip Quarl* (1727), by an anonymous hand, and the greatly superior *Peter Wilkins* (1751), by Robert Paltock, are two of the best-known works which *Crusoe* inspired in its own century. The latter, however, has a strong admixture of *Gulliver*.

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veracity by the accumulation of minute particulars. It is a just retribution for so successfully counterfeiting the truth that *Robinson Crusoe* should have been demonstrated to be nothing but an allegory of its author's life as conclusively as though that author had been Shakespeare or Bacon.

His other works.

Defoe sought the subjects of most of his other works of fiction in the world of crime or vice, or both; and, living in an age which hungered for realism, he had no scruple about handling his material realistically. In the *Memoirs of a Cavalier* (1720), indeed, and in *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), the criminal element is absent. But the *King of Pirates*, the *Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the famous Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *John Sheppard*, and *Jonathan Wild*, all published between 1720 and 1725, announce plainly by their titles into what sort of company we have got, though *The History and Remarkable Life of the truly Honourable Colonel Jacque* (1722) is less explicit. Defoe knew his public, and it was no inclination to the true *gusto picaresco* which made him select this class of hero and heroine. He had much in him of the journalist, even of the gutter-journalist, and his very title-pages (which in the foregoing enumeration have been rigorously abbreviated) are redolent of the broadside, the chap-book, and (in the case of *Moll Flanders* particularly) the headline. It is true that he labours the moral of his books with great diligence, stoutly maintaining that his object is edification. But it is no more possible to acquit him than to acquit Richard-

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son of having purposely diversified his exhortations with very questionable stuff, and of having endeavoured to secure a large congregation by holding out attractions of a decidedly equivocal character.

His view of life is essentially *bourgeois*, if the adjective may be risked; and his moral code is of no very lofty order. He wrote both a *Complete Gentleman* and a *Complete English Tradesman*, but he was more at home in the latter than in the former part. For Defoe was one of the few men in literature who have written, not what they must, or what they could, but, what they knew would suit a particular and special market, and yet have achieved, not success merely, but, fame. The odd thing is that, for all this exclusive regard to the commercial side of his calling, the one author whom in his happiest moments he resembles is John Bunyan. In characters like William the Quaker in *Singleton*, and Amy in *Roxana* (1724), there is not a little of the directness, force, and humour with which the *Life and Death of Mr Badman* abounds; and though he wants Bunyan's peculiar raciness of flavour, he has much of his vigorous homeliness of idiom. From mannerism he is not wholly free; and there are certain common slips in grammar, and certain favourite turns of speech, by which the specialist is enabled to decide whether any piece attributed to him is genuine. In describing an exciting episode in which everything depends upon the spirited rush of the narrative, he is not comparable to Smollett, for example, for in Defoe the artist was swallowed up in the reporter. His touch, that is to

His instinct for business.

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say, is at times fumbling and uncertain; but, when by dogged perseverance and good luck he hits the mark, he contrives such an effect of truthfulness as it is given to few to compass. It is not the least of his distinctions that in his *Journal of the Plague Year* he should be thought to have almost equalled Thucydides or Lucretius, who have each described the ravages of a deadly epidemic with such closeness of observation and such particularity of detail that no two modern physicians are agreed in their diagnosis of the symptoms.

Richardson.

In a patient attention to minutiæ Defoe finds a formidable competitor in Samuel Richardson[1] (1689-1761). The son of a joiner, and himself a thriving printer, his first venture in authorship was modest enough in its original conception. But out of a collection of letters designed to keep maid-servants in the way they should go, grew *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), which achieved instant success. *Clarissa; or the Adventures of a Young Lady*, followed in 1748, and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* in 1753. Throughout his life Richardson was an amateur of respectable female society, and the incense of its adoration was highly grateful to his nostrils. That he can never have been a "man's man" is patent from his works. He had little or no "knowledge of the world," and how he contrived to evolve a Clarissa from the study of the little group whose admiration he so eagerly absorbed, is one of those

[1] *Works*, ed. Leslie Stephen, 12 vols., 1883; Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, 3 vols., 1892, vol. i.

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mysteries which might invite investigation if literary annals were not full of similar enigmas.

It is not, we believe, conclusively established whether Richardson had read his Marivaux; but, if not, the similarity in tone between the two is an extraordinary coincidence. *Pamela* is everywhere reminiscent of *Marianne;* and if the heroine of the former be less odious than her French sister, that is only because she does not pretend to be genteel. In truth, the intrinsic merits of *Pamela* will not tolerate any searching scrutiny. No doubt it contains in embryo many qualities which appear in perfection in Richardson's later work. The situations are vividly enough presented, the characters are sufficiently distinct and lifelike, and there is a supply of that thin and primitive form of humour with which Richardson had to be content. What is intolerable about the book is its moral atmosphere. If this be "teaching the passions to move at the command of virtue," we like not the method of instruction. But the last word on the subject of Mr B—— and his precious lady was uttered long ago in *Joseph Andrews.*

Pamela.

Neither can it be said that *Sir Charles Grandison* is a work for all time, though its length suggests that it was written with an eye on eternity, and not merely on a single age. The Clementina episode, though once esteemed, in Major Pendennis's language, "doosid affecting," is now apt to seem only wearisome; and there are few bores in fiction who can approach the excellent Dr Bartlett.

Grandison.

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As for the hero, he is altogether, as the saying goes, too good for this world. The comment of the average man must inevitably be, that if every one were as richly endowed as Sir Charles with good looks, health, strength, riches, and skill in manly exercises (including sword-play), it were a simple thing to be virtuous. To proclaim the book unreadable is to talk nonsense. There is much in it that is amusing, and much that is noteworthy. But when we read the eight volumes, it is to laugh *at*, and not to laugh, or weep, *with*, the characters. They interest us, not because they are like ourselves, but, because they seem so far apart from us. They move in a medium of feeling and ideas which has passed away, and which we find it hard to reconstruct. In a Jones, a Western, or a Sophia, we recognise our own image, we acknowledge our own flesh and blood. Not so with a Grandison or a Jeronymo.

Clarissa.

Richardson embarked upon *Clarissa* in his usual matter-of-fact way; but his genius got the better of him, and the work left his hands, neither a guide to conduct nor a handbook of polite behaviour, but, a tragedy. For *Clarissa* is conceived and executed on the grand scale and in the grand manner. The action proceeds with measured but unfaltering steps towards the inevitable goal, every one of the innumerable incidents assisting its progress. As the catastrophe becomes imminent the gloom grows deeper and deeper. Yet the reader is fain to cling to hope until hope has become impossible, and the breathless excitement of suspense

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has been superseded by the dull agony of despair. The impress of dignity is stamped upon the conduct of the plot. No trivial or ludicrous element intervenes to distract or to annoy. The whole picture is in strict keeping; and we are spared any serious lapse into the incongruous or the grotesque.

Its surpassing merits.

Richardson has been justly accused of founding the tradition—still *in viridi observantiâ*—of depicting high life from secondhand knowledge. His lords (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu pronounced) talk like country justices, while "his virtuous young ladies romp like wenches round a maypole." This defect is almost wholly absent from *Clarissa*, the personages in which, with the exception of Lovelace and his friends, are not of the town, but of the country. Mr Harlowe has rather more polish than Mr Western, although their notions of filial duty coincide in a very striking manner; but the one has as little desire or expectation as the other of being admitted to the inner circle of true fashion. Miss Howe is the most vivacious of young ladies, the most steadfast of correspondents, and the truest of friends, yet she savours more of Lady Mary's maypole than of the rout or the card-party, and has enough good sense not to pretend to *ton*. Lovelace, to be sure, is a "man about town," and so is his friend, Jack Belford. In attempting their portraits, Richardson ran the risk of overstraining his powers, and, indeed, the vice of theatricality is not wholly avoided. The happy stroke of making Lovelace a firm believer in revelation (most contemporary moralists would have

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made him at the very least a deist) is more effective for the purposes of compunction and remorse than convincing as a matter of probability. But, when all is said and done, Lovelace is the polite villain, *par excellence*, of all fiction, without peer or rival. Not that we would disparage the noble figure of Clarissa, whose pre-eminent virtue is so artfully qualified with pardonable human weakness that she seems to have but a stronger claim to respect and sympathy. At no moment of her history is she more admirable than when all is lost, and she knows herself defeated, ruined, and undone. It was the character of Clarissa herself which mainly assured the ascendancy of Richardson over France. Diderot exploded in eulogy; Rousseau praised, and paid the faltering tribute of imitation; and, through them, Richardson became a powerful factor in the genesis of the romantic movement. Nay, long after Diderot and Rousseau had gone to their account, the nineteenth century romantics disdained not to drink at the same fountainhead. "Le premier roman du monde," was the terse and emphatic verdict of Alfred de Musset about this extraordinary book.

Fielding.

The first excursion of Henry Fielding[1] (1707-1754) into fiction took the form of what Richardson and his friends considered a lewd and irreverent parody of *Pamela*. *Joseph Andrews* appeared in 1742, and determined once for all the form of art in which the author's genius was to find its

[1] *Works* (complete), ed. Roscoe, 1 vol., 1848; *Works*, ed. Gosse, 12 vols., 1898-99; Dobson, *Fielding* (E.M.L.), 1883.

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adequate expression. True, *Jonathan Wild*, though published, along with two other volumes of *Miscellanies*, in the following year, may well have been an earlier composition, but *Jonathan Wild* is a *tour de force* in irony, and not really a novel. Born of an ancient house, and educated at Eton and Leyden, Fielding at twenty-one found himself launched upon the town with the choice of becoming either a hackney writer or a hackney coachman. In about ten years he produced a couple of dozen of comedies, farces, and burlesques (of which anon); but after the passing of the Licensing Act of 1737, he withdrew from the theatre, and was called to the bar, whence he reaped nothing better than a "Trading Justiceship." His labours in connection with the *True Patriot* and the *Jacobites' Journal*, to which he contributed in the eventful year 1745, left him ample time to perfect his great work, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, which appeared in 1749. *Amelia* followed after an interval of two years, and in 1752 he reverted for a short time to journalism. Failing health and a shattered constitution drove him to Lisbon, where he died in 1754. His posthumous *Journal* of the voyage thither is a truly pathetic record, only to be paralleled by Sir Walter Scott's diary, or the autobiography of Mrs Oliphant. In his own lifetime many persons of fashion were pleased to regard Fielding as a low fellow, a sot, a sponger, a debauchee; and many persons, not of fashion, have clung to that charitable tradition ever since. That he was improvident is undeniable; that he was no ascetic is

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certain. He was "formed for happiness," and his natural spirits, as his celebrated kinswoman tells us, enabled him to find rapture and cheerfulness in the most unpromising situations. But the nobler features of an essentially manly and generous character were never wholly obliterated by misfortune, poverty, or squalor; and his faults were those which spring from too easy a temper and too mercurial a constitution.

His art.

The critic of Fielding has the advantage of being able to compare his author's principles to some extent with his practice. In many of the delightful chapters prefixed to the books into which *Tom Jones* is divided, as well as in similar interpolations in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding discusses his art with perfect candour, though generally in the ironical strain. To deduce a code of regulations from utterances of this sort would be pedantry of the kind which he himself peculiarly detested. Fielding declined to be judged by the hard and fast canons of which his age was so fond. The critic, in his view, is no more than a clerk whose office it is to transcribe the rules and laws laid down by genius. But while Fielding's preliminary discourses cannot be reduced to system, we may note two or three of the principal ideas to which he is fond of recurring. His muse, at the risk of being voted "low," embraces in her regard all sorts and conditions of men; and these are to be presented in the spirit of comedy. The novel, as Fielding conceives it, is a comic epic in prose; and morals are better reformed by wholesome laughter than by noisy indignation. Lastly, he claims to have

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described "not men but manners; not an individual but a species." Thus a novelist should be like Imlac's poet, who is not to "number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest," but to "mark general properties and large appearances."

His types.

How consistently he worked on the lines thus indicated, needs no elaborate demonstration. He never, it is true, sacrifices the lifelike touch of the "here" and "now" without which a novel is as nothing. True also it is that he is the most distinctively *English* writer since Shakespeare; and this was doubtless one of the obstacles to his obtaining a welcome in France. Yet we feel that, in all his characters, Fielding has boldly sought out the essential, leaving the accidental to take care of itself; that in every case he has seized upon the type; and that in his hands we may almost pronounce fiction to be more probable than history. Something of this sort no doubt is the meaning of Byron's remark that Fielding is "the prose Homer of human nature." We know that Mr Allworthy is Ralph Allen; that Mr and Mrs Booth are Mr and the first Mrs Fielding; and that a certain Mr Young was the prototype of Parson Adams. But not even these characters suggest that they were drawn from some living individual in the way in which some of Smollett's compel that inference. And this absence of all thought of literal transcription from fact (which is quite consistent with a genuinely artistic "realism") materially assists in the maintenance of the fine

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temper that pervades Fielding's works. If he ever runs the risk of being savage, it is in *Jonathan Wild*, which by its length imposed too heavy a strain upon the ironical method. But, as a general rule, his attitude to life is strikingly like that of Le Sage, though he now and then permits himself to adopt a more serious tone; and in his turns of thought and phrase the resemblance is extremely close.[1]

There can be little doubt which is the greatest of Fielding's works. It is not *Jonathan Wild*, though that boasts two or three scenes which he never bettered. The dialogue between the hero and heroine, and that between the hero and the ordinary, can never be forgotten; and, save to those whose digestion is something queasy, the Misses Lætitia and Theodosia Snap are a perpetual delight. Nor is it *Joseph Andrews*, for there Fielding has evidently not yet made sure of his footing. Yet Mrs Slipslop, the Tow-wouses, and, above all, Abraham Adams—one of his most finished creations—are among the immortals. There remain but *Amelia* and *Tom Jones* to dispute the supremacy, and it is hard to see how a just judge can award the prize to the lady. In plot there is no comparison between the two; and in construction also *Amelia* is conspicuously inferior. Nor, we think, does it boast any characters which captivate

Tom Jones.

[1] The description of Joseph Andrews as having an air "which, to those who have not seen many noblemen, would give an idea of nobility," is precisely in the vein of the famous: "Après cela on nous réconcilia," &c.

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the reader's imagination as many do in the other. Square, Thwackum, Black George, Mrs Honor, Partridge—these are a few of the *dramatis personæ* who linger in the memory. The character of Jones himself, so favourite a peg for trite moral reflections, shall be left for others to wrangle over. There is, happily, no room for wrangling over the ever-charming Sophia. But the greatest character in the book—as some may think the greatest character in English fiction—is Mr Western. We are introduced to him when he detects Tom in the act of poaching; we leave him making a night of it with Mr Nightingale's uncle; and his every speech and every action in the long interval is exquisitely characteristic and appropriate; for Fielding treats his victim as though he loved him, and not, which is the manner of some, as an enemy against whom he cherishes a personal grudge. That in *Tom Jones* Fielding should have been at his best is not surprising. *Amelia* was written when his health was collapsing under the thankless labours of his office; and there is more than a hint in it of a debilitated frame and a broken spirit. In *Tom Jones* there is no relaxation of fortitude; the mind is at its very soundest. Moreover, *Tom Jones* had expended upon it a larger share of time and labour than any other of his works. In point of style, indeed, there is little to choose between them. A good style, Fielding professed to think, comes by practice, like a good hand in writing. If this be so, Fielding must have had all the practice he required before writing his Lucianic fragment, *A Journey from this World to the*

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next,[1] a piece which cannot be pronounced successful as a whole, but in which the characteristics of his manner are fully developed. There are no contemporary authors whose style produces so exquisite a sense of pleasure, or tempts so strongly to a leisurely perusal. Fielding was not far wrong in recommending his readers to go slowly, for to read him in a hurry is necessarily to miss some of his choicest beauties. He is masculine and vigorous without being coarse; smooth and polished without being mannered or affected; racy and idiomatic without being colloquial or vulgar. And predominating over all is the indefinable note of the scholar and the gentleman, which is necessarily wanting in Richardson as it is wanting in Defoe.

Smollett.

If Fielding, in *Tom Jones*, carried the English novel to the end of a stage more difficult and important than any which it has had to traverse since, we may almost say that Tobias George Smollett[2] (1721-1771) started from a point farther back than that at which Fielding began. In *Roderick Random* (1748), in *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), and in *Ferdinand, Count Fathom* (1753), he reverted not so much to the type of *Gil Blas* as to the older form of the picaresque novel which Le Sage had modi-

[1] This was first published among the *Miscellanies* (1743). But, as we have hinted, the conjecture seems a likely one that the contents of these three volumes were of earlier date than *Joseph Andrews*, the success of which led to their publication.

[2] *Works*, ed. Anderson, 6 vols., 1820; ed. Henley (whose introduction should on no account be overlooked), 12 vols., 1900; Hannay, *Smollett*, 1887.

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fied with such fortunate results. He boldly claims that author as his model, but of his tone, his temper, his sagacity, his tolerance, he has nothing. We know him, apart from the tone of his books, for jealous, irritable, and vindictive. He made an attack upon Fielding, then knocking at death's door, which scarce Churchill outdid when he assailed Hogarth. He libelled and lampooned nearly every one from whom he had solicited or obtained a favour. In his conduct of the *Critical Review* he got into hot water with as many people as possible. His experiences as a surgeon's mate on board one of the King's ships can scarcely have assisted to civilise or soothe this raw and ferocious Scot, so keen to pick a quarrel with his enemy, the world. Yet, when fairly in the booksellers' employment, he must have fared better than many another, and it is safe to conjecture that his pen brought him a much more ample revenue than Fielding's ever did. Though his darling tragedy, the *Regicide* (1749), had been burked by the malignity of Garrick and the machinations of Lyttelton, the repentant manager made some amends by producing the *Reprisal* (1757), a comedy which long held the stage. If funds were low, a translation, or rather paraphrase, like his version of *Gil Blas* (1749) or of *Don Quixote* (1755) replenished his purse; while to learn that his *History of England* (1757-1762) fetched him £2000, is to reflect that, as foreman of the Grub Street gang, he had the very best of what was going. His conscience was not sensitive, else had he not pitchforked (for a consideration) the memoirs of Lady

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Vane into *Peregrine Pickle*, with which they have nothing to do. From a literary point of view he was almost as well employed in compiling a *Compendium of Authentic and Entertaining Voyages*, or a *Modern Universal History*, as in preparing his *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), which bears the unmistakable mark of ill-health and depression, or in devising the atrocious collection of dreary filth and pointless satire which he called the *Adventures of an Atom* (1769). Yet, in the very year of his death, *Humphrey Clinker* was bequeathed to the world to prove of what stuff its author was truly compact.

Random, *Pickle*, and *Clinker* are the three works of Smollett which really count. Sir Walter Scott, indeed, considered *Fathom* superior to *Jonathan Wild*, an opinion which must always remain one of the mysteries of criticism; though *Fathom* too has its successes, such as the account of the hero's mother, and the celebrated night in the robbers' hut,[1] and in point of feeling and refinement there is little to choose between the Count and the personages who give their names to Smollett's first novels. Two more disreputable and hateful beings than Roderick and Peregrine have rarely masqueraded as respectable heroes. They delight in every species of cruelty; practical joking is their chief form of wit; and to "reap a little

[1] Mr Henley has ingeniously pointed out that in *Fathom* Smollett first struck the note of terror which others were subsequently to turn to such good account. But was not the note of terror in *Fathom* rather an echo from the picaresque romance, which always revelled in robbers and their dens, than an anticipation of Horace Walpole?

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diversion," as their vile phrase goes, from the extreme physical pain, or acute mental discomfiture, of a fellow-creature, is to them the highest form of happiness short of unrestrained and sottish debauchery. The ladies who become their wives in the last chapter are inoffensive, but absolutely colourless. No one can help feeling some curiosity as to whether Jones will succeed in marrying his Sophia; but whether destiny will ultimately yield Pickle or Random to the arms of his adorable Narcissa or Emilia is a matter in which no human being ever took the slightest interest.

His picaresque novels.

The change of tone between these earlier works and *Humphrey Clinker* is agreeably apparent. The cynical, inhuman note disappears, the humour becomes genial, the characters are depicted with kindliness and good nature; and all this without any sacrifice of robustness or real strength. Matthew Bramble, Winifred Jenkins, and Lismahagow are three as admirable portraits in their kind as painter ever drew, and the admixture of Scotch local colour — so curiously absent from the earlier chapters in *Roderick Random*—is a far from unpleasant novelty.[1] The power of delineating character in a few bold strokes is, in truth, one of Smollett's most valuable gifts, and he found in the navy a rich supply of practically untouched material

Humphrey Clinker.

[1] Smollett is the first man who depicted the national peculiarities of his countrymen with anything like accuracy. Note, for instance, the speech of Maclaymore in *The Reprisal*. Also, he used the device of mis-spelling in a workmanlike and effective way, which is more than can be said of Fielding in *Wild*.

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to work upon. Trunnion, Hatchway, Pipes, Bowling, Morgan—all are friends whom we could ill spare, and from whose loins has sprung a numerous and not unworthy progeny. Whenever Smollett lights upon a tarpaulin, he seems to be happy. It cannot, perhaps, be said that he invented the device of making his characters habitually employ in general conversation the technical vocabulary of their occupations. Few attornies had appeared in comedy or fiction whose talk did not consist of jocose allusions to fines, recoveries, remainders, and conveyances in tail. But it is manifestly upon Smollett's model that later writers have regulated their employment of this useful convention, which he worked out more thoroughly than any of his predecessors, yet never abused. For though he allows himself every now and then (and that with excellent results) to break out into riotous farce, Smollett is nothing if not faithful to life as he saw it; which means usually, though not invariably, life in its squalid and unlovely aspects. A critic has said that he was the first novelist to paint domestic interiors; and certainly the opening chapter of *Sir Lancelot Greaves* (1761) lays before us an alehouse kitchen with a completeness of effect which the artist of the Maypole at Chigwell could not have excelled. Thus, whenever Smollett is narrating events or describing episodes in which we may fairly conjecture himself to have taken part, he leaves nothing to be desired in point of vividness or spirit. That the scenes on ship-board are a true picture of life in the King's navy is as certain as it is that at least one young Scot

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had met with much the same train of adventures on the road to London and after his arrival there as befell Roderick Random and the faithful Strap. "He did not invent much, as I fancy," said Thackeray, "but had the keenest perceptive faculty, and described what he saw with wonderful relish and delightful broad humour." Which is the sum and substance of the whole matter.

While Smollett was employed by the publisher of the *Critical Review*, the publisher of the *Monthly* was served by Oliver Goldsmith [1] (1728-1774), as marked a contrast to his brother hack in temperament and tone as it is possible to conceive. After leading a more or less vagrant life, Goldsmith in the 'fifties betook himself to literature, which brought him, not wealth, indeed, but, that sufficiency for daily wants which the profession of medicine had denied him. In the course of rather less than twenty years he turned out a large quantity of more than respectable journey-work, the best specimens of which are his histories and his *Animated Nature*. His first original performance was the *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759), but he abandoned this serious line of investigation, and turned his attention first of all to *The Bee*, one of the innumerable periodicals of the *Spectator* type, and then to a series of letters after the manner of Montesquieu, which were collected in 1762 under the title of *The Citizen of the World*. In 1766

Goldsmith.

[1] *Works*, ed. Prior, 4 vols., 1837; ed. Masson, 1 vol., 1878. Prior, *Life*, 2 vols., 1837; Forster, *Life*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., 1854. There are innumerable editions of the *Vicar*.

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came *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and in 1768 a comedy, *The Good-natured Man*, which was succeeded by *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1773. In addition to these pieces, he has left us two poems, *The Traveller*, 1764, and *The Deserted Village*, 1770, besides some fragments of light verse: of all which more hereafter.

If Goldsmith could impart an indescribable charm even to his compilations, what must we expect to find in work where his hands were free! As a matter of fact, there is no author for whom, as Washington Irving has well said, the reader so soon conceives an almost personal affection. The most genial wisdom, the most sensitive tact, the most delicate irony, are manifest in every line of a style which is the embodiment of simplicity, ease, and grace. It was in the workshop founded by the great Augustans that Goldsmith served his apprenticeship to the art of fiction; and Beau Tibbs is a creation for which none of his masters need have blushed. In that little snob Goldsmith laughed at the foible which was the favourite subject of his ridicule. But in such a miscellany as the *Citizen of the World* he found a convenient means of expressing his thoughts upon all manner of topics, which he freely did. The most curious point about him is his bigoted literary conservatism (or, rather, perhaps, "modernism," for the phase of taste has little claim to antiquity in England), which he carried to far greater lengths than Johnson. He despised the old ballads; hated the Shakespearean revival; pooh-poohed the Elizabethans; and honestly

His style.

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thought that Dryden and Otway were our greatest dramatists. In his serious poetry he adhered to the established, though already tottering, convention; but fate was too strong for him. He was destined to make a most valuable contribution to that most new-fangled of all literary forms, the novel. The *Vicar* is no model in point of plot or construction, and indeed it has been surmised that a whole chapter is amissing. But we may doubt if greater pains would have sensibly improved it. For its fame depends not on the intrigue, still less on the cutting of the knot, but on character and manners. The Vicar and his family form a group which has never been surpassed, and not a few of the incidents in their story—described with a humour which even to discuss is to ruin—have passed into the common stock of civilised nations. The social historian may be invited to note, that, if he desires to paint the condition of the English clergy in gloomy colours, and to depress the level of intelligence and consideration upon which that class was situated, he will be wise to leave Adams drinking his ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen, or Trulliber tending his swine, and concentrate his attention upon the matchless Mrs Primrose. The gentle and humane handling of such a character is the best possible illustration of the delicacy and refinement of Goldsmith's art.

The Vicar of Wakefield.

The last name in our list of the great English novelists of the period is that of the most eccentric, but also the most successful, of them all. Goldsmith

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opined that Laurence Sterne[1] (1713-1768) was a dull fellow, but all critics have echoed Johnson's negative. To place him in any well-defined and recognised category of novelists is impossible. He neither practised picaresque fiction like Smollett, nor painted manners on a large canvas like Fielding. He did not even analyse the female heart like Richardson. He stands in a class by himself, subject to no laws save those of his own making. But that he had unquestionable genius, not the most severe censor of his morals has seriously disputed. The bulk of his work is inconsiderable. *Tristram Shandy*, though it originally appeared in nine volumes, scattered over a period extending from 1760 to 1767, occupies little space in a library of fiction, and the *Sentimental Journey* (1768) still less. His *Sermons*, into which he infused as much of his mannerism as such performances would admit of, are nearly as dead as the discourses of Fordyce or Blair.

Sterne.

Sterne's faults, whose spring is an indomitable self-consciousness, an invincible determination to pose, are not only obtrusive but also repellent. His pathos is for the most part intolerably false; and in him the peculiar affection of the mind known as "sensibility" reaches its high-water mark. The England of his age was more emotional, or, at least, more demon-

His self-consciousness and its results.

[1] Both *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey* have often been reprinted, and are readily accessible. *Quoad ultra*, see Traill, *Sterne* (E.M.L.), 1882, and Mr Whibley's Introduction to *Tristram Shandy*, 2 vols., 1894.

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strative, than the England of that later generation which passed through the fire of the great French war. Even in the pages of the manlier novelists, we find the embrace—nay, the kiss—a common form of salutation among men; and it was not thought derogatory to their sex for them to shed copious and undissembled tears on learning of some signal act of benevolence or gratitude. But Sterne, if we may say so, is a very Job Trotter, and the most trivial things in nature—a fly or a dead ass—give occasion for the most lachrymose and affecting rhapsodies. The emotion is as genuine as Job's; Sterne knows it; the reader is soon in the secret; and, after the first two or three times, the trick fails to deceive. The result is that, when the pathetic string is to be attuned to a more serious and worthy theme, no better work is made of it, so deeply rooted and ingrained is the vice of insincerity. Closely allied to this — for "sensibility" has strange bedfellows — is Sterne's indecency, which is of the sniggering and furtive kind. From Smollett's works a far richer anthology of outcast words might easily be culled; and Smollett could never resist professional pleasantries of a somewhat crude type. But when Sterne approaches the region where free speech is difficult, and genteel periphrasis impossible, it is with the wink and leer of the adolescent schoolboy, who derives a fund of shameful and illicit enjoyment from the secret possession of a foul vocabulary. Sterne never outgrew this pathological condition. When he was stealing so much from Rabelais, he might well have

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taken a lesson from the master's frank and honest attitude to life. But there can be no question that the artful intermingling of pruriency with sentiment produced what, to the taste of his contemporaries, English and French alike, seemed a truly delicious compound, and that his defects materially assisted his popularity.

Sterne held that written language should approximate as closely as possible to the model of conversation. His own example supplies a sufficient refutation of the paradox. His style is a monument of artificiality and self-consciousness. He plundered right and left, Rabelais and Burton being his principal victims; and he was daring enough not even to shun detection by melting down and refashioning the treasures he had stolen. There is not a rhetorical artifice, not a typographical device, from the asterisk to the dash, whose aid he did not invoke to whet curiosity and fix attention. Incoherence is of the essence of *Tristram Shandy*. Diderot himself could have added little in the way of digression. The book, as has been well observed, is the *novela picaresca* of the brain. But this apparent want of purpose constitutes one of its charms. After traversing devious paths, poached ankle-deep with tears and nastiness, we come suddenly upon some exquisite scene, some vista of character which rejoices the heart and recruits the mind. In his humorous, and therefore sympathetic, observation and portrayal of certain types of human nature lies Sterne's saving grace. The brothers Shandy, Mrs

His humour.

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Shandy, Corporal Trim, the Widow Wadman, and Dr. Slop have an abiding place in English fiction. The success of the work raised up many immediate disciples. But it was easier to reproduce the mannerisms of such a model than to make a tolerable copy of its real excellences. Hence, while one school of imitators devoted themselves chiefly to the salacious aspect of Sterne's genius, the other sought to excel him in the volume and saltness of their tears. Times change and fashions with them. In due course the novel of sentiment, discursiveness, and incongruity, was displaced by a more masculine and healthy rival; nor has it since shown any serious promise of a return to popular favour. But the Shandean spirit, though it lacks a tangible embodiment of its own, is diffused in many unsuspected quarters; and Dickens, for one, testifies unconsciously to the subtle and pervading inspiration of Yorick.

Such were the writers by whom the novel was established upon a sure foundation as an independent branch of art. The law of compensation operates in literature as elsewhere; and the drama suffered heavily, especially in England, from the prosperity of its rival. Long before the date of the latest of the works we have been discussing (1771), fiction, in the sense of a more or less realistic presentation of manners, had become the most grateful of all forms of literary effort to readers, and not the least remunerative to writers. The press teemed with novels whose very names have perished,

Minor fiction.

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and the circulating library, that "evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge,"[1] was a flourishing institution. In England the old romance, already staggering to its doom, was killed outright by the new fiction. Mr Raleigh has pointed out a significant symptom of the changed order of things. Mrs Haywood (1693-1756), a writer swift to note in what quarter the wind sat, wound up her career with *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753), in place of continuing to write about *Philidore and Placentia* (1727), and similar personages. In France, the old romance died harder. We have seen that Prévost practised the historical novel after a fashion; and Mme. de Tencin was a fellow-labourer with him in the same field. At a later date (1767), Marmontel, mindful of *Télémaque*, wrote *Bélisaire*, where the quasi-historical interest, and, indeed, all interest of any description, is subordinated to edification, a remark also applicable to the same author's *Les Incas* (1778), and to the *Numa Pompilius* (1785) of Florian. Such works and all others of their kind may seem to form a connecting link between the Scudéry romance and the new romance which was about to come into being. But the dissimilarity in tone between the two extremes can scarcely be exaggerated; and the bond will turn out to be more

[1] Sir Anthony Absolute's opinion is corroborated by the tag with which *Polly Honeycombe* winds up: "A man might as well turn his daughter loose in Covent Garden as trust the cultivation of her mind to a circulating library." The curious may consult the instructive extract from the catalogue of such an institution prefixed by George Colman to that diverting play; *Works*, ed. 1777, vol. iii.

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fictitious than real. In the *Diable Amoureux* (1772) of Cazotte, indeed, with its element of occultism and *diablerie*, the breeze which heralds the new dawn sings more loudly than in all the productions of the sham-historical school put together.

During the quarter of a century which extends from 1735 to 1760, no really great or noteworthy work of fiction was produced in France, for the *conte philosophique* does not truly fall within that category. The rank and file of the novelists were following two distinct yet sometimes interlacing paths: the path of sentiment, and the path of licence. Of those who chose the former course, by far the ablest was Madame Riccoboni (1713-1792), who, greatly daring, wrote a continuation of *Marianne*. Of the other school which was at least as numerous, it is unnecessary to specify any member save its undisputed leader, C. P. Jolyot de Crébillon (1707-1778), the dramatist's son. His private life was irreproachable, and his works, of which the *Sopha* (1745) is a fair example, are of a notoriously licentious complexion. But his technique is uniformly dexterous; he has a light touch and abundance of gaiety and wit; he is careful to strike no false note of seriousness, nor to divagate into sentiment; and his ingenuity and good spirits almost redeem from sameness a theme which, to judge by literature, is as apt to become monotonous as any other. In the large circle of his literary descendants in France, there is none who carries the thing off with a better grace than he.

Sentiment and licence.

In England we do not find the same sharp distinc-

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tion between schools of novelists. Sentiment of course there is in plenty; of licence with an obviously immoral intention, hardly any; for the work of writers like the infamous Cleland is outside the province of literature altogether. Of "realism" there is a great deal, and Sir Anthony Absolute's condemnation of the novel no more than reflected the opinion of many serious-minded heads of families, who would by no means have relished the imputation of being Methodists. But the poison was secreted less by realism than by sensibility,—the tender representation of the passions which at once wrung the heart and kindled the imagination. Sentiment apart, one of the most popular forms of novel with the general public was that which satirised actual life and pilloried real persons. The key to many of such works is not now easily come by, and much of their point was necessarily ephemeral. But Francis Coventry's *Pompey the Little* (1751) may still be glanced at with amusement, were it only for its pictures of university life; while more remarkable still is Charles Johnstone's *Chrysal; or the Adventures of a Guinea* (1760-1765), the truculence of which is beyond all bounds. The sub-title of the work indicates the frame in which an enormous number of episodes are set; and the total result is a sort of Satan's invisible world displayed. The guinea passes through many hands, and finds owners in all ranks of life. But it rarely touches the palm of an honest man or a virtuous woman. Public corruption and private vice are lashed with great heartiness; and

The Roman à Clef.

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many of the scenes are drawn with a rude vigour, which does not always degenerate into callous brutality.[1]

The Fool of Quality.

A famous and typical example of the novel of sentiment is furnished by *The Fool of Quality* (1766-1770), which in the following century aroused the enthusiasm of Charles Kingsley. Its author, Henry Brooke (1703-1783), had written a tragedy on the subject of Gustavus Vasa, which is remembered, if at all, by the solitary apophthegm which Johnson travestied in the line, "Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat." *The Fool of Quality* is chiefly remarkable for incoherence. It is full of highflown talk; full of digressions; full of stories within stories; full of the praise of hardiness; full of railing at the conventions of civilised life. Its characters perform the most astounding acts of benevolence on the spur of the moment, and think nothing of secretly slipping a purse of a hundred guineas into one another's hands or pockets. The British constitution is expounded, and its beauties and benefits are duly set forth. Lastly, need it be said that our old friend Lycurgus is once again to the fore? Not more coherent than *The Fool of Quality*, and dashed with a strain of insanity from which Brooke was free, is the *Life of John Buncle, Esq.* (1756-1766), by Thomas Amory, Gent., who was born in 1691, and lived to

John Buncle.

[1] One trifling matter may be noted about *Chrysal*. It bears to be written by "An Adept"; and the Dousterswivel business with which it opens, although treated in the spirit of irreverence and burlesque, seems to indicate that the hankering after things mediæval had now set in with some strength.

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within three years of a hundred. He was a bigoted Socinian, or Christian deist, as he preferred to call it, and had amassed, though not digested, a quantity of out-of-the-way knowledge, of which he was only too willing to give the public the benefit. Among the subjects which John Buncle discusses with the seven lovely beings who wed him in succession, or with other people, are the primævity and pre-eminence of the Hebrew tongue, the celibacy of the clergy, the iniquitous pretensions of the Church of Rome, the authority of the New Testament narrative, and the true significance of the Gospel of St John. There are, besides, copious dissertations on the wonders of the microscope, minute medical details, slabs of algebra and trigonometry, and a catalogue of the numerous sea-shells which adorn Miss Harriot Noel's "grot." Harriot, unfortunately, does not live to become Mrs Buncle, for the small-pox "steps in," and, "after reducing the finest human frame in the universe to the most hideous and offensive block," carries her off, despite her prodigious learning. The book is the queerest rigmarole in the world; though in some parts it is human, as in the article of eating and drinking, of which a good deal goes on. But what Hazlitt meant by describing *John Buncle* as the English Rabelais is probably more than any human being can divine.

Conclusion.

We have thus completed our survey of the novel down to the close of the first period of its existence. A new spirit is on the eve of permeating Europe,—a spirit destined to effect one of

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the most remarkable revivals ever seen of the creative faculty in literature. Both Diderot and Rousseau have caught the earliest breathings of its influence. In England the first sail set to catch it (so far as prose fiction is concerned) has been hoisted by a man of ability and wit, indeed, but not of genius. *The Castle of Otranto* is a highly artificial piece of work, and as true to life as its author's villa was true to the principles of Gothic architecture. Nevertheless, it indicated more plainly than the work of a greater man might have done the irresistible set of wind and tide. All-powerful and all-conquering as the romantic movement was, it would have been seriously hampered for want of a suitable medium of expression in prose but for the labours of those who, by their example, prescribed, if we may so say, the conditions of the enterprise, and laid down, in comprehensive though unambiguous terms, the conventions to which fiction must conform under penalty of ceasing to be art. For this arduous pioneer work, as well as for the rich harvest of their genius judged by its own deserts, the world owes a heavy debt of gratitude to the eighteenth century novelists, and especially to those of England.

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CHAPTER V.

POETRY IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

QUALITY 'VERSUS' QUANTITY—"DULL OBEDIENCE" TO TRADITION AND RULE—FRENCH POETRY—THE "RETURN TO NATURE"—LOVE OF NATURE IN THE ENGLISH POETS—THEIR MANNER OF DISSEMBLING IT—ABUSE OF PERSONIFICATION—STEREOTYPED VOCABULARY—JAMES THOMSON—'THE SEASONS'—'THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE'—THE SPENSERIAN METRE—INFLUENCE OF THOMSON—AT HOME—ABROAD—EDWARD YOUNG—THE 'NIGHT THOUGHTS'—BLAIR'S 'GRAVE'—POPULARITY OF THE "MACABRE" ELEMENT—WILLIAM COLLINS—HIS 'ODES'—THOMAS GRAY—HIS 'ODES'—HIS 'ELEGY'—THE HEROIC COUPLET—JOHNSON—GOLDSMITH—THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THEM—CHURCHILL—SATIRE—ALLAN RAMSAY—HIS COLLECTIONS OF SONGS AND BALLADS—TOM D'URFEY—SACRED POETRY—LIGHT VERSE—THE "CLASSICAL TRADITION" IN FRANCE—MYTHOLOGICAL ALLUSIVENESS—J. B. ROUSSEAU—DELILLE—PIRON—GRESSET—DORAT—"GLOWWORMS OF PARNASSUS"—THEIR TOPICS—VOLTAIRE AS A POET—THE 'ADIEUX À LA VIE'—SUMMARY—MACPHERSON'S 'OSSIAN'—PERCY'S 'RELIQUES'—CHATTERTON.

IT is common ground with all modern critics, that the intrinsic value of the poetry[1] produced during our period is singularly small. Even in the most gener-

[1] In addition to the works already cited, see Chalmers's *Works of the English Poets*, 1810, vols. xii.-xviii.; *Select Works of the British Poets*, ed. Aikin, 1 vol., 1820 (an extremely convenient though somewhat un-

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ous and comprehensive acceptation of the term, we must own that its quality is insignificant compared with its quantity. Verse as a medium of serious literary expression was never more popular. It apparently found readers as well as writers; the booksellers undertook the production and distribution of versified works constructed on a scale that would terrify the hardiest publisher of to-day; and the interest aroused by the appearance of such performances was often quite genuine. Hence many respectable persons, with few solid claims to poetical genius, were led into the attempt,

Quality versus quantity.

> "By dull obedience and by creeping toil
> Obscure, to conquer the severe ascent
> Of high Parnassus."

Their efforts proved futile as regards posthumous renown; but, in point of more substantial and immediate reward, they were probably more fruitful than might be imagined.

Even in the case of those who had the true inspiration, we are frequently conscious of some obstruction which seems to choke their utterance. They are content to run in old grooves; and "dull obedience" threatens to be their undoing. In England each man dutifully turns his hand to the ode, the elegy, the satire, and the tragedy. In France the prescribed tasks, in addition

"Dull obedience" to tradition and rule.

attractive anthology); Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, 3 vols., 1896; and Crépet's *Les Poètes Français*, t. iii., Paris: 1861. Editions of the more important poets dealt with are noted in the course of the chapter. The poetry of Thomson, Young, Gray, Churchill, and Goldsmith will be found in the excellent and well-known "Aldine" series.

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to drama, are the ode, the epistle, the *conte*, the fable, and the epigram. The mistake of the age lay, not in holding that the game has rules, but, in ignoring the complementary truth that no game is worth playing in which, within the limits of its rules, ample scope is not left for initiative and audacity. Even the vigorous intellect of Johnson[1] was imbued with the idea that the resources of the poetical art were exhausted, and that Pope had uttered the final word on versification. The "mosaic" theory of verse is very candidly expounded in Saint-Lambert's preface to his *Saisons* (1769), a ludicrously bald and pedantic imitation of Thomson, which was extolled to the skies by Voltaire. Saint-Lambert seems to hold that everything must be done by rule and compasses. Descriptions of rural scenery will pall on the most ardent lover of nature. Accordingly they must be interspersed with episodes in which the human element predominates, and *l'homme champêtre*, with his manners and his toils, his pains and his pleasures, must be introduced at stated intervals. Even in his pictures of rural scenery, the poet must take care "*ménager des contrastes*." After a vivid account of the sweltering heat of noon, he must conduct his reader to the cool depths of some shady forest. In short, the poet must work upon the principles of the hackney-dramatist, who interpolates "comic relief" every now and then as a matter of course. It is a curious stroke of irony that the most strenuous protest against such a point of view which aeppared in England within our period, came from the

[1] *Lives of the Poets, ut sup.*, Pope, vol. iii. p. 141.

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pen of one who might naturally be supposed to belong to the "old gang." Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), with their strong appeal for originality, and for an intelligent, in place of a slavish, imitation of the ancients, anticipated many of the fundamental doctrines of the romantic creed.

French poetry.

It is a natural supposition that in France the notoriously strict laws of versification were largely responsible for depriving the poets of freshness and spontaneity. The resource of blank verse was denied them; the alexandrine was as apt as the English heroic couplet to settle down into a monotonous and conventional movement; and the selection and arrangement of the rhymes were hampered by canons which to an English versifier would have seemed intolerably galling. As a matter of fact, these restrictions have in other ages been found to be perfectly compatible with poetry of a very high order, and we must seek elsewhere for a satisfactory explanation of the poetical barrenness of France in the eighteenth century. In one respect it may be said that the French poets had a positive advantage; for, though their vocabulary was in a sense limited and inadequate, they had no language specially warranted "poetical." French verse, said Gray, "differs in nothing from prose where the thought or image does not support it." Here, then, if anywhere, was an opportunity for employing what, according to Wordsworth,[1] is the appropriate diction of poetry: "a selec-

[1] See the Preface, appendix, and supplementary essay to the *Lyrical Ballads;* Wordsworth's *Works*, ed. Morley, 1888, p. 849.

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tion of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." If the French poets failed to achieve much that was really poetical, it must have been because they never succeeded in achieving the "state of vivid sensation" desiderated. Too much has been made of the alleged absence of a true feeling for natural beauty from the English poetry of the first half of the eighteenth century. But too much could scarcely be said as to the difficulty of discovering any such feeling at all in the French verse of the same period.

The "return to nature."

It was not, indeed, until about the time when Rousseau broke with the *philosophes* that nature, in the sense of the phenomena of the external world, began to enter the French poetic scheme. Even then the process of emancipation from the pseudo-classical tradition was tedious and protracted. Thomson was not more enthusiastically welcomed than Gessner, whose frigid prose *Idyllen* are the merest "mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song." Saint-Lambert admitted that his fellow-countrymen had not, like the English, that taste for rural life which ought to inspire the higher orders of society. He therefore proposed to interest them in the subject by artfully representing nature "dans ses rapports avec des êtres sensibles." But he declined to have anything to do with the peasant as he really is. The countryman of the poet must be a very different personage indeed from so low and besotted a being. The spectacle of this French man of letters endeavouring to fan the flame of enthusiasm for

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nature in his breast recalls the fat Baron in Dorat's *Sacrifices d'Amour*, who, after once waddling round the flower-garden of a morning, "se récrie sur l'utilité d'exercice et le plaisir de vivre à la campagne."

Love of nature in the English poets.

It is not, then, we trust, presumptuous to claim for the English poets a more liberal measure of the power of appreciating "nature" than was vouchsafed to their French brethren. The *Grongar Hill* (1726) of John Dyer, with its easy and unpretending simplicity, and what (to the judgment of contemporaries) seemed its alarming metrical licence, or *The Chase* (1735) of William Somerville, so instinct with the zest of open-air life, though composed when the author was laid aside from active participation in the scenes he depicts, or the closing lines of Blair's *Grave* (1743), worth all the rest of a by no means despicable poem—these may serve as convenient, though by no means solitary, proofs of our contention.

Their manner of dissembling it.

Yet the English poets, if they did not kick or bow nature downstairs, were often highly successful in dissembling their love for her. They were wedded to a ready-made "poetic diction," and to a series of traditional poetical artifices, which may once have been inspiring and suggestive, but which came to be mechanical and meaningless long before they fell into desuetude. Johnson was right in exposing the fallacy of those who think that not to write prose is to write poetry; and Gray was right in opining that in England the language of poetry is never the language of the age. "Our poetry, on the contrary,"

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he writes to West, "has a language peculiar to itself." The correctness of this view is demonstrated by the futility of the attempts made from time to time to dress poetry in the unsifted and promiscuous speech of everyday life. But the mistake committed by the poets of our period consisted in their misapplication of a sound principle. They deliberately confined their vocabulary and phraseology to a not very extensive range of words and expressions guaranteed by usage and precedent to be "poetical." Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was perhaps more responsible than any other work for the firm establishment of this policy of restriction. Seldom has a poem, in itself so worthy, wrought greater mischief. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that two pieces only (apart from professedly light and frivolous verse) are wholly free from its spell. Of these the one is the "I am content, I do not care," of John Byrom (1692-1763); the other is the extraordinary *Song to David* of Christopher Smart (1722-1771). Now, Byrom has been called "the very type and incarnation of the ingenious amateur," while Smart, as we all know, was a madman; and even Smart calls the sea "the turbulent profound."

Abuse of personification.

Two prominent features of the poetical mannerism of the age may be more particularly adverted to. The first is the excessive use of personification. Virtues and vices, qualities and passions, are invested with a capital letter, and invoked, apostrophised, and dismissed, in the accents of praise or blame, of approbation or abhorrence. Half the odes turned out in the course of our period had never been

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brought off but for this accepted mode of dealing with Hope, Liberty, Independence, Despair, and a hundred similar abstractions. Now an Ode, as Young sagaciously remarks, is, or ought to be, "more spirituous and more remote from prose" than any other kind of poetry; and doubtless it was to maintain this its character that the trick was adopted. But, after incessant repetition, it loses all impressiveness except in the best hands, and when impressiveness is gone, the commonplace soon sinks into the ludicrous.[1]

The second prominent feature to which reference may be made is the habitual employment of far-fetched synonyms or fantastic periphrases to express ordinary ideas.[2] A device of this sort may be agreeable enough when used with tact and discretion. But it is a different matter when every substantive has a conventional epithet expressly allotted to its service. Vessels that fly obsequious to the blast, or hounds that perpetual snuff the tainted gale, soon cease to stimulate curiosity. Perhaps the most compendious example of the periphrastic poetical

Stereotyped vocabulary.

[1] Compare Voltaire: "Qu'est ce que c'est qu'une ode? C'est le plus petit mérite du monde que celui d'en faire. Galimatias, rapsodies, et cela surtout en style marotique, qui est la plus exécrable chose du monde. Je ne comprends pas que d'honnêtes gens lisent ces choses là."—To Mme. de Graffigny, 5th December 1738.

[2] Of so familiar a practice it is needless to multiply instances. It may suffice to note the following, collected at random: "Plumy race" = birds (Thomson); "the vast profound" = the sea; "attentive timoneer" = man at the wheel (Falconer); "gelid cistern" = cold bath (Armstrong); "sight-invigorating tube" = telescope (Blair); "warbling wire" = harp (Beattie); "blue profound" = sky (Akenside). The origin of the practice, as Mr Raleigh shows in his work on *Milton*, 1900, may be traced to that poet.

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style of the eighteenth century is afforded by Dr Blacklock's amplification of the opening verses of the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes. Any one with a moderate degree of ingenuity and a slight tincture of the Latin idiom could turn out such stuff by the yard. What havoc the "classical" convention worked in the poetry of this island may readily be judged from a comparison between Burns's poems in the vernacular and Burns's poems in what he conceived to be the best literary English. It is a truism that, while the former abound in life and vigour, the latter are for the most part "fushionless" and depressing.

James Thomson.

The three names which stand out conspicuously in the roll of British poets from 1714 to 1778 (Pope, let it be explained, has been dealt with in connection with the preceding period) are Thomson, Collins, and Gray. James Thomson[1] (1700-1748) was the son of a parish minister in Roxburghshire. After undergoing the usual school and university course preparatory to entering the ministry of the Church of Scotland, he migrated to London in 1725. There he was befriended by the notorious David Malloch or Mallet; and there, in 1726, he gave his *Winter* to the public. The tale of *The Seasons* was completed in 1730, and thenceforth he lacked for little or nothing in point of patronage, place, or encouragement. His dramatic efforts met with little success; but, as a lyric poet, he deserves to be remembered by

[1] *Works*, 2 vols. 4to, 1862. *The Seasons* and *The Castle of Indolence*, ed. Robertson, 1 vol., Oxford: 1891.

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his graceful Ode, "Tell me thou soul of her I love," and always will be remembered by his spirited "Rule Britannia," which found a place in the masque of *Alfred* (1740). To the other side of the account must be placed the five parts of *Liberty* (1734-1736), a poem, replete with classical and topical allusions, which Johnson, on its first appearance "tried to read, but soon desisted." Thomson left behind him a reputation, in private life, for indolence and amiability. His fame as a poet has undergone the customary vicissitudes. Yet it is safe to predict that the ultimate verdict will be emphatic in his favour.

The Seasons.

The defects of *The Seasons* lie on the surface. A too rigid adherence to the supposed requirements of poetical dignity and a marked inclination to turgid rhetoric about "uncorrupted times, when tyrant custom had not shackled man," and the like topics, are among its principal weaknesses. Nevertheless, despite the "vicious style," the "false ornaments," and the "sentimental commonplaces," *The Seasons, teste* Wordsworth himself, is no less than "a work of inspiration." Natural scenes are observed and recorded at first hand; and Thomson is never content to draw upon the store of observation accumulated by illustrious predecessors. His diction is marred by an obsequious compliance with the convention of the time. Yet his blank verse can boast a novelty of construction and an originality of cadence unrivalled for more than a century. It is not the blank verse of the Elizabethans, nor is it the blank verse of Milton, although, as Mr Raleigh has pointed out, it

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is not without strong reminiscences of the latter. It is something *sui generis*. "His numbers," says Johnson, "his pauses, his diction, are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation." Some of his effects are attained by means of an artifice which has rarely failed of success in English poetry: the apt introduction of a polysyllabic word. Thomson's "unfathomably," "unconquerable," "futurity," "unpremeditated," are efforts in the same direction as Shakespeare's "multitudinous" and "incarnadine," and are by no means without parallel in the works of his minor contemporaries. And, lastly, we may note his curious anticipation in certain passages of effects which, in the succeeding century, were peculiarly identified with the hand of Lord Tennyson.[1]

The Castle of Indolence.

The two cantos of *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), though not much longer than the shortest of *The Seasons*, are, in their way, as important as the earlier poem. The mere fact that the work is written in the Spenserian metre is significant. That noble measure had lain practically untouched for many years, unless Pope's juvenile imitation can be taken to have interrupted a long train of neglect. Presently, however, to copy Spenser became a favourite exercise of the poets. William Shenstone (1714-1763) avowedly sought to emulate in his *Schoolmistress* (1742) the "language, simplicity, manner of description, and peculiar tenderness of sentiment" of the author of the *Faery Queene*. Gilbert West (1703-1756) engaged in the same pastime; so

The Spenserian metre.

[1] See, *e.g.*, *Spring*, ll. 1119-1124; *Winter*, ll. 14-16; 23-27.

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did William Julius Mickle (1735-1788), the translator of the *Lusiad*, in his *Sir Martyn* (1778); and James Beattie (1735-1803) deliberately adopted the stanza in his *Minstrel* (1771-1774), because "it allows the sententiousness of the couplet as well as the more complex modulation of blank verse." In all these copies of Spenser we seem to detect a secret feeling on the part of the imitators that there was something essentially ludicrous in their model. The first edition of the *Schoolmistress* professed to be nothing better than a travesty, and the true mock-heroic note is sounded in Beattie's lines upon "fell chanticleer." And so with Thomson. "In comes another set and kicketh them downstairs;" "And sure his linen was not very clean"—these are a couple of the lines in which he gives the rein to his sense of the jocular possibilities of the metre he has chosen. For all that, *The Castle of Indolence* is the work of a true poet; a poet, it may well be, who thinks he is engaged upon a mere *tour de force*, but a poet who is writing greater things than he supposes. Just as merciless, and often gross, burlesques of the common Pastoral assisted in driving back that species of poetical art to something more like reality in the page of Ramsay, and thus preparing the way for the ultimate triumph of realism in Burns and Crabbe, so the half-serious, half-jesting mimicry of Spenser proved the herald of better things to come.[1]

[1] Most imitations of Spenser, according to the *Critical Review*, were "a string of obsolete words put together without any meaning." —Vol. ii. p. 277 (1756).

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Though Thomson can scarcely be said to have founded a school, or to have communicated his peculiar faculty of describing scenes of natural beauty, few of those who, after him, expressed themselves in blank verse, did not owe something to his example. But for him, it is pardonable to conjecture, Young had remained faithful to the heroic couplet, which sufficed to paraphrase the Book of Job, and to celebrate the day of judgment. But for him, the meritorious, albeit republican and glacial, Mark Akenside (1721-1770) had sung the charms of nature and the *Pleasures of Imagination* (1744) in numbers sweetened by rhyme. Nor can it be supposed that Somerville, Dyer, Armstrong, and Glover were unaffected by the excellence and the success of such a model. *The Chase* (1735) had, perchance, been less agreeable than it is, the *Ruins of Rome* (1740) and the *Fleece* (1757) more pretentious and futile, the *Art of Preserving Health* (1744) more conspicuously pedestrian, and even *Leonidas* (1737) more bald (if that be possible), had Thomson not reminded his age that blank verse is more than "prose cut into lengths." Something, too, of Thomson's gracious spirit passed into Goldsmith, and Cowper stands his manifest debtor. But his influence at home was less potent than his influence abroad, where in conjunction with Richardson, Gessner, and Young, he accelerated the "return to nature" in a way that would have amazed no one more than himself. It was not, however, until 1749 that Kleist produced his *Frühling*, the very name

Influence of Thomson.

At home.

Abroad.

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of which discovers its source, nor was it until ten years later that *The Seasons* was translated into French. Then, despite certain passages supposed to be coarse and vulgar, its vogue was immediate and assured.

The high and long-continued popularity of the *Night Thoughts* in France and on the Continent generally is to the critic of the present day one of the most mysterious of literary phenomena. The life of Edward Young[1]—that stern chase after patronage and preferment—extended from 1681 to 1765. In its course, he attempted most forms of literary composition, and, without winning complete success in any, achieved unmistakable failure in one or two. His odes are execrable. His tragedies never hit the public taste. His satires, collectively entitled *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion* (1725-1728), and written in the orthodox rhymed metre, are tolerable in parts, though on the whole inferior to Pope's, which they preceded. As for his great work, *The Complaint; or Night Thoughts* (1742-1744), we may allow with Johnson that its excellence is "copiousness," and take leave to add that it contains a few dozen of good lines. Young knew some of the elements of his craft, and by no means underestimated the value of a mouth-filling word. But his lapses into the baldest prose are frequent, and his numbers lack variety. The punctual recurrence of the full-stop in the middle of every third or fourth line is indescribably monotonous In truth, Young is

Edward Young.

The Night Thoughts.

[1] *Complete Works*, ed. Doran, 2 vols., 1854.

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indubitably inferior as a writer of blank verse to Robert Blair[1] (1699-1746), the versification of whose *Grave* (1743), as critics have observed, has more than a faint reminiscence of the later Elizabethan dramatists. For such defects of manner, there is little in Young's matter to atone. Like Blair, he chooses a dismal and well-worn theme. That death is inexpressibly horrible, because it extinguishes all human life and activity—that all men must ultimately succumb to it, and will probably do so at quite an unexpected moment—that death, after all, does not mean extinction, but merely an interval of unconsciousness in the existence of an immortal soul—these are the startling propositions advanced in the *Grave* and in the *Night Thoughts*. Arrayed in the forbidding garb of declamatory addresses to an imaginary Lorenzo, they secured for Young a great reputation in his own country, and an even greater reputation, as we have said, in continental Europe. Though no complete translation appeared in France until 1770, select portions of the *Night Thoughts* had been rendered in French ten years earlier, and received with enthusiasm. Young was regarded as the most English of the English; the typical representative of the national spirit of melancholy. Sublime, though unequal; less "wild" than Shakespeare, but no less a child of nature; he was acknowledged to be an adept in arousing thrills of

Blair's Grave.

Popularity of the "macabre" element.

[1] *Poetical Works*, ed. Anderson, 1794; *The Grave, illustrated by twelve etchings after William Blake*, 1808; *The Poetical Works* of Beattie, Blair, and Falconer, ed. Gilfillan, 1854.

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delicious emotion. Nothing in Young or Blair afforded greater satisfaction than the "skull and cross-bones" business, that infusion of what is now called the "macabre" element, which was destined to predominate so strongly in the first-fruits of the new romance. We dare not attribute all this enthusiasm for the sepulchral bard to mere fashion or affectation. We may not doubt that the younger Mirabeau was in earnest when he wrote to his Sophie that a book like Young's "va au cœur quand on est malheureux." We can do no more than conjecture that the reader of the eighteenth century found convincing evidence, which entirely eludes posterity, of an attempt on the part of the poet to carry into practice the admirable principles which he subsequently sketched in his *Conjectures* (*supra*, p. 178).

William Collins.

It is a relief to turn from poetry like Young's to the work of William Collins[1] (1721-1759), whose supereminent merit as a lyric poet was duly appreciated in his lifetime by few save Thomson. He requited that poet's encouragement and sympathy by an obituary *Ode*, which deserves to be ranked along with the *Dirge in Cymbeline* (1749) as a specimen of his dexterity in the handling of measures more regular than those of the traditional "Pindaric." His posthumous fame has been more adequate to his signal deserts; yet it has too often been assumed that to extol Collins is to depreciate Gray, and that to extol Gray is to depreciate Collins.

[1] *Poetical Works*, ed. Langhorne, 1765; ed. Thomas (Aldine), 1866.

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The set of critical opinion having, on the whole, been in Gray's favour, the desire to redress the balance has sometimes inspired aggressive panegyrics of his "rival," based upon grounds neither relevant nor convincing. We shall not attempt to award to Gray and Collins their precise number of marks in this competition; and we shall no more applaud the latter for being an amateur of regicide than condemn him for being, not only (like most of the English poets of his age) a sturdy Hanoverian, but, actually the *vates sacer* of William, Duke of Cumberland.

His Odes.

It would be a poor compliment to Collins to demonstrate the superiority of his lyrical pieces by force of contrast with similar effusions by most of his contemporaries. The Odes of Young, of Beattie, of Mason, and of many others, have little interest or importance for us save as illustrating the stages by which bald and frigid conventionality may sink into absolute doggerel. Collins demands to be tried by the highest standards; and, so judged, it is only to the very greatest of the English lyric poets that he can be pronounced inferior. He is by no means free, it is true, from the poetical faults of his time. The fondness for inverting the common order of his words with which Johnson charges him is a venial offence beside his over-indulgence in personification. Distress, Fancy, the buskin'd Muse, dejected Pity, Cheerfulness (a nymph of healthiest hue), gloomy Rape and Murder, and finally, brown Exercise, are a few of the characters introduced to our

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notice in the *Ode to Pity*, the *Ode to Fear*, and the *Ode to the Passions*. It must be owned, too, that now and then the wing of his inspiration droops with fatigue. As Mr Swinburne has pointed out, the *Ode to Liberty*, after a noble opening, subsides "to the prostration of collapse." Yet the sum of these defects does not amount to much. The Odes we have named, and their companions in the volume published in 1747, are of the stuff of true poetry, and the *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* (1750), though the text is in some passages uncertain, is perhaps a more consistently sustained effort than any of them. The *Ode to Music* and the *Ode to the Passions* have been the most popular of Collins's writings. But if his very choicest work were to be selected, some would be disposed to vote for the first stanza of "How sleep the brave," a model of dignified simplicity, and the two stanzas in the *Ode to Evening*, beginning with the line "Or if chill blustering winds or driving rain."

Thomas Gray.

The poetry of Thomas Gray[1] (1716-1771) was received with far louder applause by his own generation than that of Collins, though the harmony of the chorus was rudely broken by the emphatic dissent of Johnson. Adam Smith professed to think that Gray wanted nothing, had he but written a little more, to make him "the first poet in the English language." Now Wordsworth has taught us that Smith was "the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this

[1] *Works*, ed. Gosse, 4 vols., 1884.

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sort of weed seems natural, has produced."[1] But many other men of weight expressed their admiration in language less extravagant, yet perhaps exaggerated enough to stir Johnson's antipathy to Gray into action. Few poets have possessed Gray's fastidious delicacy of judgment or his abundant stores of learning. That portion of his days which was not spent in continental travel was passed in the seclusion of a college. Yet he had few of the typical defects of the virtuoso. His interest in public affairs was keen, if tinctured with a pleasing cynicism; and the impulses of a constitutionally amiable nature remained unrepressed by the selfishness which a solitary existence is supposed to breed. Conjectures whether in another age and in other surroundings his muse would have been more prolific belong to the vainest kind of speculation. His intense fastidiousness, coupled with indifferent health and an indolent disposition, is amply sufficient to account for the meagreness of his "output." We are content to accept him as he is, thankful that his talents did not run to seed in that "*stérile abondance*" which marked the French verse of the period.

His Odes.

Gray's reputation as a lyric poet depends, in the first place, upon the *Ode on a distant Prospect of Eton College*, the *Hymn to Adversity*, and the *Ode on the Spring*, all written in or about the year 1742, though not published until some years later; and, in the second place, upon *The Progress of Poesy*, *The Bard* (both 1757), and the *Installation Ode* (1769).

[1] Wordsworth, *Works*, *ut sup.*, p. 869 *n.*

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The *Eton College* ode is graceful and touching, albeit the thought is eminently hackneyed; the *Ode on the Spring* is decidedly superior, albeit the nightingale is called "the Attic warbler"; while the *Hymn to Adversity*, marred as it is by the abuse of personification, is unmistakably the finest of the earlier lyrics, though inferior to the *Ode on the Pleasure arising from Vicissitude*, when that fine fragment is extricated from the inept additions of Mason. As for the "full-dress" Pindarics, with their numbered strophes and antistrophes, that on the Chancellor's Installation proves that Gray was not designed for the manufacture of solemn occasional verse. *The Bard* is chiefly interesting for its liberal employment of alliteration. Otherwise, it contains too much swelling rhetoric; and Johnson has sternly pronounced its doom. One would fain, however, rescue *The Progress of Poesy* from the same condemnation. That it is unequal, far-fetched, even pedantic in places, cannot be denied; but it contains two or three stanzas which are entitled, not merely by prescription, but, by merit, to a place in any collection of the best English poetry.

Gray took Dryden for his model in the Pindaric odes, and from the same source he borrowed the form of verse peculiarly associated with his name. In his poem on the death of Cromwell, and in the *Annus Mirabilis*, Dryden had employed a measure declared by himself to be the most magnificent that our language affords. Gray's own *Impromptu* shows that it may be effectively adapted to purposes very

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different from those to which it has generally been reckoned suitable. But, as practised by men like Hammond, Falconer, and Mason, or even by men like Shenstone and Beattie, it displayed potentialities of monotony and dulness which even the heroic couplet could scarcely equal. Gray, on the other hand, handled the elegiac quatrain with extraordinary success. It is said that the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (1750)—polished and repolished with Virgilian solicitude—is artificial, and so it is, in the sense in which the *Æneid* is artificial. Even from Johnson the *Elegy* extorted warm praise, and for once at any rate "the common-sense of readers uncorrupted by literary prejudice" has proved trustworthy. True, the topics of the *Elegy* are very far from being novel. They are similar to those which occupied the thoughts of Young and of Blair. Yet what a change has been wrought by the hand of the master! Reduce the elegy to prose (the test of all poetry, according to Voltaire) and it will read little better than a bundle of familiar platitudes. But, where Young and Blair failed, Gray has succeeded in producing a work of matchless grace and beauty; and the *Elegy* is likely long to remain a most triumphant demonstration in literary art of the comparative insignificance of matter, and the paramount importance of form.

His Elegy.

Gray's chief attempt in the heroic couplet is a solemn fragment on *The Alliance of Education and Government*, to secure the completion of which no one would be prepared to sacri-

The heroic couplet.

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fice his playful *Ode on the Death of a favourite Cat.* In truth, even before the death of Pope, the measure had begun to fall from its high estate. Spurious epigram and pointless antithesis were becoming the bane of all who chose that form of expression, whether in the descriptive, the didactic, the expository, the moralising, or the censorious, vein. *The Shipwreck* (1762) of William Falconer (1732-1769) is a specimen of the lengths to which faithful devotion to a model may go. Falconer is by no means a wholly bad writer, and in some respects he forms a connecting link between the verse of Pope and that of Crabbe. But nearly every line in which he sings "th' impervious horrors of a leeward shore" seems to be carefully constructed upon a given plan. The characters make speeches as though the scene of their activity was the plains of Troy; and the familiar formula "He said" is regularly employed at the beginning of a line to announce the point at which the speaking ceases and the narrative is resumed. The publication of Johnson's *London* (1738) and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*[1] (1749) might have reassured the timid that it was still possible for a new poet to employ the heroic couplet without sacrificing his own individuality. These noble pieces, of which the latter is decidedly the more impressive and the more poetical, may, for convenience' sake, be termed satires. They betray none of that personal animosity and venom which are deemed all but essential ingredients in the composition of the true satirist. But what they lose

Johnson.

[1] *Works*, ed. Murphy, 1823, vol. i.

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in vindictiveness they gain in dignity and weight. No performances of the kind indicate so strong an impetus of moral and intellectual force behind their sonorous and majestic language. The same reserve of power may be discerned in the Drury Lane *Prologue* (1747), in the couplets which Johnson supplied to Goldsmith's *Traveller*, and in the verses added by him in the year preceding his death to Crabbe's *Village*.

Goldsmith.

Oliver Goldsmith (*ante*, p. 162) was unquestionably Johnson's pupil in this particular measure, and he, too, in his *Traveller* (1764) and his *Deserted Village* (1770), which belong to the same decade as *The Shipwreck*, proved that it might still be an appropriate vehicle for the expression of genuine emotion. Both poems are full of charm and tenderness, and both are informed with that fascinating "sensibility" which was coming into high fashion, and which was the precursor of qualities infinitely preferable to itself. It is the presence of this element which differentiates the poetry of Goldsmith from that of Johnson. Both were in point of literary theory rigidly "conservative," though Johnson was the more liberal of the two. But in practice, the younger man reproduced in his work the new ideas which were "in the air," while the elder was absolutely proof against them. Compare Goldsmith's *Hermit* (1766)—so rich in subdued pensiveness and engaging melancholy — with the lines written by Johnson on the death of Robert Levet[1]

The contrast between them.

[1] They will be found in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. Morris ("Globe" series), 1893, p. 580.

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(1782), and the difference between the two temperaments is instantly apparent. Yet the advantage lies not wholly with the unconscious representative of the new school of thought and emotion. Any infusion of sensibility would have ruined beyond all chance of repair the manly simplicity, the dignified reticence, the transparent sincerity, of Johnson's austere and moving verses.

Churchill.

From Samuel Johnson to Charles Churchill[1] (1731-1764) is indeed a long and melancholy descent, and, but for the lingering tradition of his potency as a satirist, it had perhaps been needless to do more than name the author of the *Rosciad*, the *Ghost*, and the *Epistle to William Hogarth*. In his treatment of the heroic couplet he follows Dryden rather than Pope, but, his effects being attained purely by means of malignity and bad blood, he cannot be said to share his pretended master's virtues. Intolerably diffuse, he could not help every now and then hammering out a good line, and there are passages, in the *Prophecy of Famine*, for example, which extort admiration by the shock of their concentrated rancour and indefatigable brutality. It is this vitriolic quality, rather than any excellence in his "mere knack of rhyme," which singles him out from the ruck of contemporary satirists, most of whom were otherwise better men than he. Young's *Love of Fame*, as we have said, is passable though his drawing is rudimentary and his colour glaring. But of Akenside's *Epistle to Curio*, or Falconer's *Dema-*

Satire.

[1] *Poetical Works*, 1764; ed. Gilfillan, 1855.

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gogue, or Beattie's lines *On the Report of a Monument to be erected in the Abbey to Churchill's Memory*, as well as of a dozen similar productions—what more is to be written than that they rail at much the same things in much the same way, not always, it may be, without spirit, but almost always without distinction? A far more significant form of literary art is the partly satirical, partly descriptive, piece, revived in Scotland by Allan Ramsay[1] (1686-1758), and continued by Robert Fergusson[2] (1750-1774). Ramsay's *John Cowper*, *Lucky Wood*, above all, his masterpiece, *Lucky Spence's last Advice*, and Fergusson's *Hallow Fair*, *King's Birthday*, and *Leith Races*, have no precise parallel in the literary English of this or any other period.

Allan Ramsay.

Ramsay's name was not unknown in England, where he had Somerville, of the *Chase*, among others, for a correspondent. But we cannot suppose that either the poems we have mentioned, nor yet his *Gentle Shepherd* (1725), met with adequate appreciation in that country. In the land of its origin, the latter work has perhaps been overvalued. Suggested plainly by the burlesque pastorals with their Hobbinols and Bumkinets, it never seems to take itself quite seriously, or to be able to shake off the garb of travesty. Ramsay laid Scottish literature under a heavier obligation by beginning the publication, in 1724, of two collections of Scots poems, songs, and ballads, *The*

His collections of songs and ballads.

[1] *Works*, 3 vols., 1851.

[2] *Works*, 1807; *Scots Poems*, Edinburgh: 1898.

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Evergreen, and *The Tea-table Miscellany*. It is superfluous to say that old texts were by him restored, rewritten, and generally subjected to every species of emendation and indignity, yet it was something to have excited the public curiosity in a sort of writing supposed to be beneath the notice of refined and educated persons. Some of Ramsay's original contributions to these volumes have stood the test of time. Others bear the stamp of vulgarity, not because they are written in the vernacular, but, by reason of certain slight though quite perceptible *nuances* of tone and sentiment. Like many poets of his race, Ramsay is least admirable when he is celebrating his countrymen's tradition of "conviviality." Yet, if he was no more than a tolerable song-writer himself, he was the efficient cause of more than tolerable song-writing in others. But for his initiative and example many an inmate of the Scottish "nest of singing birds" might have warbled in strains less musical, or never warbled at all.

Tom D'Urfey.

An analogous service to that of Ramsay in Scotland was rendered to the songs and ballads of England by Tom D'Urfey (1650-1723). Some of his *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719) have an undoubted emetic as well as cathartic virtue, yet his anthologies illustrate almost every variety of English metre to which it is possible to set a catching air. It is one of the advantages of living in a late age that versification has been made easier by the enterprise and industry of predecessors. As in our own day, so in the eighteenth century, there is little with which

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to reproach the minor poet in point of technique. According to Johnson, the standard of ordinary prose-writing had risen considerably in the course of his lifetime, and if this cannot be said to be as generally applicable to the class of poetry which makes an immediate impression on the memory by its tripping measures, that is only because it had already attained to a much higher level than prose.[1] We may indeed pronounce that the field of light literature yields a higher average in mastery of form and in achievement of effect than the neighbouring domain of serious verse. Swift had applied the octosyllabic rhyming metre to jocular themes with incomparable ease and success; but that need not make us disparage the *Spleen* (1732) of Matthew Green (1696-1737), who expounds a variety of the Epicurean doctrine with inexhaustible good-humour and gusto. If Christopher Anstey (1724-1805), that agreeable man of the world, could evolve no surprises out of the familiar jog-trot, his easy and flowing anapæsts are enough to make the *New Bath Guide* (1766) remarkable, irrespective of his gift of humorous observation. Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (1709-1759) deserves passing mention, if only for having employed (in his *Ballad in Imitation of Martial*) a double stanza with alternate rhymes, which won for

Light verse.

[1] An improvement is undoubtedly noticeable in devotional poetry. Doddridge is infinitely less crude than Isaac Watts; Charles Wesley (1708-1788), amid a quantity of inferior work, wrote two or three hymns of high lyrical excellence and masterly workmanship; and John Logan (1748-1788), who practically edited the Scotch *Paraphrases*, had a correct ear and a fastidious taste, if he lacked fire.

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Praed some of his most conspicuous successes, and which an apparently trivial alteration, dictated by genius, prepared for still more glorious triumphs. But of all the poets who cultivated the less solemn side of their calling, none rose quite to the level of Goldsmith. His *Elegy on the Death of a mad Dog* is certainly no better than *John Gilpin;* but the *Haunch of Venison* (1771) and *Retaliation*[1] (1774) are probably better than any piece with which they can fairly or profitably be compared. In the latter poem we seem to perceive the intellect of Goldsmith working at a higher pressure than in any other of his works, and with results proportionately more striking.

The "classical" tradition in France.

Defects closely akin to those which we have observed in the English poetry of our period marked the poetry of France, while there was less true poetical feeling in the latter country to rise superior to the drawbacks imposed by literary convention. We have pointed out that the language of French poetry was the language of French prose. Clearness and precision were its characteristics rather than impressiveness and nobility; and even a writer like Delille, who had little of the root of the matter in him, felt its want of richness and variety. Moreover, the speech of the educated and literary class was separated by a hard and fast line from that of the mob; and the success of Vadé (1719-1757),[2] who invented the *genre poissard*, and

[1] *Works*, ed. Prior, vol. iv.

[2] *Œuvres*, 4 vols., Paris: 1758.

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brought the flavour of the fish-market into the halls of literature, was perhaps partly due to gratitude for an attempt to recruit a jaded vocabulary from a new source. The names of Virgil and Horace, of Tibullus and Propertius, were never out of the mouths of French poets and critics; and their misappropriation by the former, or misapplication by the latter, is often extremely ludicrous. Voltaire may not have been talking nonsense when he addressed Parny as "*mon cher Tibulle*," for Parny (1753-1814)[1] excelled most of his fellows in freshness and reality, nay, almost touched passion now and then; and his lines, *Sur la mort d'une jeune fille*, are among the most exquisite added to French literature in the course of the century. But Voltaire was not talking good sense when he likened Saint-Lambert and Delille to Virgil; though he fell short of the egregious folly which tacked the name of Pindar on to that of Ecouchard-Lebrun. Boileau was, to some extent, responsible for this misguided aping of the classics. But, as John Wilkes was never a Wilkite, so Boileau was never the blind partisan or slave of his own doctrines. The man who delivered French verse, tied hand and foot, to the rigorous tradition of pseudo-classicism was Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (1669-1741). His versification was no doubt correct to the most minute detail, and French critics, like M. Faguet, do well still to pay their tribute to his true ear for rhythm. But he bound many a grievous burden upon the backs of

[1] *Œuvres diverses*, 2 vols., Paris: 1812. See Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries*, xv. p. 285.

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his successors, more especially in the matters of periphrasis and mythological allusion. The propensity to say everything in the most roundabout manner was not (let us again repeat) aggravated, as in the case of English poetry, by the ear-marking of certain words as specifically and irrevocably poetical; but the mythology becomes intolerable, and would soon destroy a far more specious show of sincerity and emotion than the French poetry of the eighteenth century can possibly make. In the vast concourse of appeals to the denizens of Olympus, not one note rings true, save perhaps the heartfelt invocations of Bacchus which make the drinking-songs of honest Panard (1694-1765)[1] such cheerful reading.

Mythological allusiveness.

Among the more ambitious poets who have succeeded in being taken seriously, the place of honour must be assigned to this same J.-B. Rousseau,[2] who, besides his work for the stage, composed odes, epistles, and cantatas. In the first-named class, the *Ode à la Fortune*, in the last, the *Circe*, are perhaps the most celebrated. But they have all lost most of their savour, except from the point of view of the technical expert; and, in fact, Rousseau wrote nothing so worthy of a true lyrical poet as the ode composed upon his death by one of Voltaire's butts,

J.-B. Rousseau.

[1] "Il avait pour le vin une affection si tendre qu'il en parlait toujours comme de l'ami de son cœur; et, le verre à la main, en regardant l'objet de son culte et de ses délices, il s'en laissait émouvoir au point que les larmes lui en venaient aux yeux."—Marmontel, *Mémoires*, p. 222.

[2] *Œuvres*, 4 vols., Londres: 1753.

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the despised Lefranc de Pompignan (1709-1784). We feel that he was at his best, not in his higher flights, but, when he gave loose to those more sombre emotions of his nature, the alleged indulgence of which procured his lifelong banishment from France in 1712. In an age in which to excel in epigram was no rare distinction, he stands not far below the very highest of those who so excelled. For in epigram he wrote to please himself; in odes or epistles he wrote to please his patrons; and, in selecting scriptural subjects for his lucubrations, he was merely studying the gloomy and puritanical taste which prevailed at Court during the last years of Louis XIV. The poems of Louis Racine (1692-1763) on *La Grâce* and *La Réligion* were doubtless dictated by a more genuine piety; but they may be remembered as a warning to every son to consider well before he follows his father's calling, if that father happens to have been a poet. We have already alluded to Saint-Lambert and his attempts to induce his countrymen, by precept and example, to "return to nature." Two other poets who shared in this enterprise perhaps deserved better than he. Roucher (1745-1794) was the author of *Les Mois* (1779), a work on the Thomsonian model, with a few good passages. Jacques Delille[1] (1738-1813) acquired an extraordinary reputation as a poet, which has wholly evaporated since his death. Neither in his *Georgiques* (1769) nor in his *Jardins* (1780) is it easy to detect anything to rave about, though doubtless he represented the last expiring

Delille.

[1] *Œuvres*, 16 vols., Paris: 1824.

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struggle of the "classical" movement. The romantic school, when it came into being, saw nature with other eyes than his; and André Chénier (who falls outside the scope of the present volume), in his revolt against cosmopolitanism and Anglomania, chose to repair to the ancients themselves, instead of to the faint and all-but unrecognisable copies of their masterpieces which lay more ready to his hand.

In lighter forms of verse Delille was not so much amiss; and it is in these that the best French poetry of our period will be found. Piron, Gresset, and Dorat stand forth most conspicuously among those who paid court to the muse of wit and laughter.

Piron. Alexis Piron[1] (1689-1773) turned his hand against every man, and was even presumptuous enough to direct his well-polished weapons against the great Voltaire. He has suffered on that account in posthumous reputation; for, though he was able to bring as good as he got, the number, influence, and "solidarity" of the *philosophes* gave them an overwhelming advantage. Even they, however, have been powerless to obliterate the memory of his brilliant successes on the stage, or to rob him of his supreme distinction in the art of epigram.

Gresset. Jean Baptiste Louis Gresset[2] (1709-1777) instantly caught the ear of the French public with his *Ver-vert* (1734), a mock heroic poem, full of vivacity, upon a parrot belonging to a convent.

[1] *Œuvres complètes*, 7 vols., Neuchatel: 1777.
[2] *Œuvres poétiques*, 2 vols., Londres: 1758.

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He followed up this beginning with *Le lutrin vivant* and *La Chartreuse*, the versification of which is distinguished by the same easy grace. His literary career was of short duration, for after he had written one of the two or three best metrical comedies produced in France since the days of Molière, he abandoned the world and resumed the monastic life for which he had originally been destined. Claude-Joseph Dorat[1] (1734-1780) was one of the most finished, as well as the most prolific, of all the frivolous poets of his time. He, too, was a foe to the philosophical party, whose claims to superiority he has ridiculed in his verse with remarkable point. That his excellences should have been steadily decried in revenge is a matter of course. There is no good foundation for the Gilbert and Malfilâtre myth,[2] which represents these eminently mediocre young bards as having been starved to death owing to the machinations of Voltaire's disciples. Nevertheless, the writer who at the outset of the race for fame forfeited the goodwill of the predominant literary faction was heavily handicapped, and, though Dorat's verse is essentially of the artificial and sophisticated order, he has suffered perhaps rather more than he deserved from this disadvantage.

Dorat.

For the rest, the tradition of Chaulieu was caught

[1] *Recueil de contes et de poèmes*, La Haye, 1776. His complete works fill nineteen or twenty volumes.

[2] Gilbert's well-known *Ode imitée de plusieurs psaumes* will be found, along with several other pieces belonging to our period, in Mr Saintsbury's selection of *French Lyrics:* 1882.

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up by the Abbé Grécourt (1684-1743), and was continued by a series of writers extending from Voisenon, who was born in 1708, to Boufflers, who died in 1815. Of their number were Collé (1709-1783), Bernard (1710-1775), Ecouchard Lebrun (1729-1807), Rulhière (1735-1791), and Bertin (1752-1790), the friend of Parny, and, like him, a Creole. These writers by no means abstained from the more serious forms of poetry, and were indeed prepared to attempt anything from odes to *amphigouris*. Lebrun was indefatigable in flattering the powers that be, and, by good luck, was able to keep his talent for panegyric from rusting, inasmuch as he survived two lawful kings and lived well into the first Empire. But as his real strength lay, not in pieces like his ode on the *Vengeur* legend, but, in his epigrams, so his brethren will survive in virtue, not of their more ambitious attempts, but, of their *vers de société* and kindred performances. They have all a strong family likeness, though one bard may differ from another in the degree of licence or licentiousness which he thinks proper to allow himself. Hence their faithful echoing of the tune of the time is apt to be monotonous as well as unedifying. Written with a vigilant eye to some individual patron who kept open house and a good table, or to that no less exacting, though collective patron, *la bonne compagnie* in general, such verse as theirs could scarcely avoid sameness and repetition. What were their themes? Let Voltaire's hack reply:

"Glowworms of Parnassus."

Their topics.

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"Dans mon grenier, entre deux sales draps,
Je célébrais les faveurs de Glycère,
De qui jamais n'approcha ma misère ;
Ma triste voix chantait d'un gosier sec
Le vin mousseux, le frontignan, le grec,
Buvant de l'eau dans un vieux pot à bière ;
Faute de bas, passant le jour au lit,
Sans couverture, ainsi que sans habit,
Je fredonnais des vers sur la paresse ;
D'après Chaulieu, je vantais la mollesse."[1]

The grimness of the picture is relieved only by the comforting recollection that the poets we have enumerated made a far better thing out of their trade, both at bed and board, than this inhabitant of the Parisian Grub Street. Putting monotony out of the question, we cannot maintain that the whole of their work was marked by sprightly fancy and a light touch. All that is meant by giving a decided preference to these "glowworms of Parnassus" is that a much larger proportion of such pieces still possess vitality, and may still be read without fatigue, than there is any reasonable chance of finding in the volumes which contain either their own more pretentious and elaborate strains, or those of others.

Voltaire as a poet.

By universal consent the greatest French poet of the time was identical with the greatest dramatist, the greatest historian, and the greatest thinker. But when we speak of Voltaire[2] as a poet, our thoughts do not turn to the frigid and long-winded *Henriade* (1723), in which, with singular want of judg-

[1] From *Le Pauvre Diable.*

[2] A most convenient volume containing Voltaire's *Contes, Sattres, Épîtres,* &c., is published by Firmin-Didot. Paris: 1876.

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ment, the complicated machinery of the classical epic is brought to bear upon strictly historical events. Nor do they linger on *La Pucelle* (*circ.* 1730, and published in 1755), that shameful burlesque of many cantos, for which not even advancing years raised a blush on the author's cheek. Nor yet again do we instinctively recur to the quasi-philosophical or theological poems, such as the *Discours en vers sur l'homme* (1738), or *La Loi Naturelle* (1756), or the poem on *Le désastre de Lisbonne*, which drew the fire of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. If it were possible to dwell upon this branch of his writings, we could point to nothing better than *Le pour et le contre* (1722), which glows with a fiery hatred of the Christian religion, and contains the famous line addressed to the Deity:

"Je ne suis pas chrétien : mais c'est pour t'aimer mieux."

But we think at once of pieces, like *Les vous et les tu*, which are miracles of delicacy and grace; or of satires like *Le Russe à Paris* or *Le Pauvre Diable*, in which astonishing keenness of wit is enhanced by flashes of personal animosity; or, best of all, of the discourses or *sermones*—no other title so well describes them — in which, with incomparable felicity of diction, and yet with an easy fluency scarce surpassed by Horace or by Swift, the poet expounds his philosophy of life. *Le Mondain* (1736) and the two sets of verses which followed in its defence are a daring attack upon the bogus-stoicism of the day, which many men professed and none practised. But even better than the *Mondain* was to come. The *Épître à Boileau* (1769), the *Épître*

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à Horace (1772), *Jean qui pleure et qui rit* (1772)—Voltaire's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* combined—and the *Dialogue de Pégase et du vieillard* (1774), may be selected as the choicest of a series which is brought to a melancholy, but not inappropriate, conclusion by the stanzas entitled *Adieux à la vie* (1778). If the gospel of *carpe diem* has never been more attractively and comprehensively preached than by Voltaire, by none has its complement, the favourite text of the Preacher, been more strikingly enforced. The Youngs and the Blairs are beaten at their own game by the Infidel, and that in virtue of his superior craftsmanship. Voltaire was able to communicate a little of his secret to the minor poets who were his juniors. The effort to attain his standard of perfection was not wholly without result; and if, despite one or two glaring instances to the contrary, the *grossièretés* of Grécourt were generally abandoned for less primitive methods, the improvement was mainly due to the example of Voltaire. But though he had many imitators he had no rival; and, whatever we may think of him as a tragic poet, his pre-eminence in the particular kind of verse which we have indicated is likely to remain long undisturbed.

The Adieux à la vie.

No critic to whose lot has fallen the survey with which this chapter has been occupied can help feeling how much more enviable is the task of him to whom has been assigned the tale of that glorious outburst of poetry which marked the closing years of the old and the opening years of the new

Summary.

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century. There it is possible to give the reins to enthusiasm, and to bestow unstinted praise with scarce a hint or afterthought of qualification. Here one must speak by the card; and the tones of eulogy must needs repeatedly falter. Yet matters will not be mended by indulging a strain of extenuation or apology. Let us remember that in the palace of poetry there are many mansions; and if, in the brilliant company which throngs its more spacious and honourable chambers, there be no more than two or three drawn from the ranks which we have just reviewed, yet are there pleasant though humbler quarters under the selfsame roof for very many of our friends.

It remains but to mention with the utmost brevity three of the indications of coming change in the world of poetry with which the closing years of our period abounded. The full elaboration of their significance is reserved for the succeeding volume.

In the first place, there was what would now be called the "Norse and Celtic renaissance," in which Gray played some part. Popular interest in the legends and mythology of "Runic savages" began to be aroused, and Paul Henri Mallet's *Introduction à l'histoire de Dannemarc* (1755-56), and still more his *Monumens de la mythologie et de la poésie des Celtes et particulièrement des anciens Scandinaves* (1756), at once stimulated and appeased the growing curiosity.

Macpherson's Ossian.

What Mallet began, Macpherson's *Ossian* (1760-1763) completed. This is not the place for pronouncing an opinion on matters so hotly

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debated as the authenticity and merits of that celebrated work.[1] It is our business merely to note the sensation which it created over the whole of Europe.

Percy's Reliques.

In the second place, the labours of all who had, like Allan Ramsay, busied themselves with the collecting of ballads and popular songs, were brought to a worthy consummation in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* (1765). How defective soever the editorial methods of the excellent prelate may have been, it is beyond dispute that his anthology succeeded in restoring the ballad and the *volkslied* to something like their true place in literature. Nowhere did the *Reliques* make a deeper impression than in Germany. From them the rising generation of poets, such as Bürger, drew deep draughts of inspiration; and from them sprung those critical theories so assiduously applied by F. A. Wolf as solvents to the unity of the Homeric poems.

Chatterton.

Finally, we content ourselves with recording the fact that Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770), during the last six years of his ill-starred life, published a number of poems alleged to be "old English," dressed up in fantastic spelling, which would deceive no expert to-day, but was successful in imposing upon not a few contemporary critics and antiquaries. Apart from their intrinsic merits as literature, upon which we are not to enter, these forgeries have bequeathed little to us save a persistent and rather tiresome comic tradition of English orthography in the Middle Ages. Their real import-

[1] See, *inter alia*, Bailey Saunders, *Life of Macpherson*, 1894.

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ance lies in the complete break with the prevailing classical convention which they imply. But the full results of that rupture were not to become apparent, in Germany for more than a decade, in England for more than a quarter of a century, to come.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE DRAMA IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION—LA MOTTE'S ATTACK—THE UNITIES—RHYME—CLASSICAL TRAGEDY IN FRANCE—THE TRAGEDIES OF VOLTAIRE—VOLTAIRE'S IMITATORS—CLASSICAL TRAGEDY IN ENGLAND—VOLTAIRE'S INNOVATIONS—ENGLISH INFLUENCES—DECADENCE OF THE CLASSICAL TRADITION—COMIC OPERA—FRENCH COMEDY—'LA MÉTROMANIE'—'LE MÉCHANT'—GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS—DESTOUCHES—MARIVAUX—LA CHAUSSÉE AND THE "COMÉDIE LARMOYANTE"—DIDEROT—HIS PET THEORIES—SEDAINE—BRITISH DRAMA—MELODRAMA—LILLO'S 'GEORGE BARNWELL'—MOORE'S 'GAMESTER'—ENGLISH COMEDY—ITS COMPARATIVE GROSSNESS—MURPHY—COLMAN—CUMBERLAND AND SENTIMENTAL COMEDY—KELLY—GOLDSMITH'S REVOLT—SHERIDAN—THE END OF BRITISH DRAMA AS LITERATURE.

AT the opening of the eighteenth century[1] the classical tradition of the French drama, supported by the great

[1] Where no specific reference is given, the more important of the works mentioned below will be found in Petitot's *Répertoire du Théâtre Français*, 23 vols., Paris: 1803-04; in Bell's *British Theatre*, 21 vols., London: 1776-1781; or in *The New British Theatre*, 19 vols., Edinburgh: 1787-88. Consult also Genest's *Some Account of the English Stage*, &c., 10 vols., Bath: 1832. A useful collection of *Chefs-d'œuvre des auteurs comiques* is published by Firmin-Didot, Paris: 1877.

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example of Molière in comedy and in tragedy of Racine, encouraged by the compliment of imitation abroad, and fortified by the authority of Boileau at home, seemed to have established an ascendancy which nothing could shake. Yet it was soon to be exposed to a spirited and effective onslaught; its most enthusiastic advocates were to become unconscious instruments in the operation of its ruin; and the history of the drama during our period was to be the record of its uninterrupted decay.

The Classical Tradition.

Antoine Houdart de La Motte[1] (1672-1731) was one of those thoroughgoing iconoclasts who take care that every fragment of the image they assail shall be ground to powder. He deliberately attacked all the most cherished conventions of French tragedy—all those "rules" upon which its very existence was thought to depend. To us it may seem a small matter that he should have ridiculed the "unities" of place and time; for we feel a difficulty in understanding by what strange misconstruction of Aristotle's language such arbitrary restrictions came to be acquiesced in by intelligent men and capable artists. Yet nothing in the *Discours* which he prefixed to his own plays can have struck La Motte's contemporaries as more daring than the suggestion that, if you can imagine yourself in Athens at one moment, you may contrive to imagine yourself in Rome ten minutes later, or the consideration that, if the events of twenty-four hours

La Motte's attack.

The "Unities."

[1] *Œuvres*, 9 vols., Paris: 1754.

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may be represented within the space of three, the process of compression may be legitimately carried still farther. La Motte, moreover, denounced the long soliloquies of the classical drama, and censured the introduction of "les confidens," whose speeches were "spatchcocked" into a play with no other end in view than to enable the hero to recover his breath. La Motte was a man of ability and determination, but Tilburina has not yet been robbed of her confidante; and Doomsday shall arrive before Sir Walter Raleigh ceases to communicate to Sir Christopher Hatton intelligence of which the latter cannot fail to be apprised already.

Rhyme.

La Motte was wise enough not to take up the manifestly unsafe position that rhyme in a drama is objectionable because no human being was ever known to employ it as a means of expressing violent emotion. Such a principle would be no less fatal to blank verse, and would, in fact, confine the dramatist to the baldest and most halting prose. La Motte *does* object to the mechanical and monotonous character of the rhymed Alexandrine; and his strictures are not ill-founded. Yet the suspicion may be hinted that in this matter Voltaire, and not La Motte, is right. Voltaire is a staunch adherent of rhyme, only relaxing so far as occasionally (in *Tancrède*, for example) to replace the orthodox couplet with "vers croisés." His reasons for the opinion that rhyme is essential to French poetry may not always be convincing. We may doubt whether the pleasure afforded by a good play is in any measure due to the

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successful surmounting of the difficulty of writing verse as correct as prose. But most judges would probably concur in the observation: "Plus un étranger connaîtra notre langue, et plus il se réconciliera avec cette rime qui l'effraye d'abord."[1] Otherwise, victory rested with the innovator and not with the conservative. Had La Motte been able adequately to translate his revolutionary theories into practice, their triumph might have been even more rapid and overwhelming than it actually was.

Classical Tragedy in France.

The author of *Le Cercle* puts into the mouth of Araminte (a lady of fashionable aspirations and execrable taste) a description of contemporary tragedy which every reader must often have felt inclined to echo in good faith. "Un tintamarre d'incidens impossibles," she calls it, "des reconnaissances que l'on devine, des princesses qui se passionnent si vertueusement pour des héros que l'on poignarde quand on n'en sait plus que faire; un assemblage des maximes que tout le monde sait, et que personne ne croit; des injures contre les grands, et par-ci, par-là, quelques imprécations." The passage is one of those unlucky strokes of irony which glance off their intended victim, and wound the person meant to be protected. It certainly states, with remarkable fulness and precision, the most obvious defects of French tragedy, including those superficial characteristics to which the British critic is not apt to take kindly. Even Frenchmen (Piron

[1] For Voltaire's controversy with La Motte, consult, *inter alia*, the preface to *Œdipe* (ed. 1730), and the preface to *Brutus*.

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for one) were not insensible to the ludicrous side of the national Melpomene, gliding majestically across the stage, with a dagger in one hand and a trumpet in the other, and "poussant des ah! des hélas! des dieux! des qu'entends-je!" (*Arlequin-Deucalion*, sc. 3). When the preliminary difficulties have been overcome, there is often little enough to reward the student's perseverance. Musty axioms and venerable aphorisms are all that many of the tragedians have to give. Yet in some cases a living heart beats beneath the formal and uninviting habiliments, and the work of Voltaire alone amply makes up for fruitless investigation pursued in other quarters.

The tragedies of Voltaire.

Voltaire's career as a dramatic author[1] began in 1718 with *Œdipe*, and terminated with *Irène* in 1778. During the greater part of these sixty years his influence was predominant over the French stage in tragedy. In comedy, indeed, he may be said to have failed, in so far as he was capable of failure. *L'Enfant Prodigue* (1736) and *Nanine* (1749) are sufficiently pleasing. They are neither better nor worse than the work of contemporaries; and to affirm that of Voltaire's tragedies would be to pay an altogether inadequate tribute to their merit. In finish of technique and correctness of versification it has been thought by some that he surpassed Racine himself; and his eminence in those respects, as well as his freedom from ambiguity, is as notable in *Œdipe* as

[1] *Théâtre de Voltaire*, 1 vol., Paris: 1884, contains the best of his tragedies and the important *Discours*.

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in any later play. But he possessed, besides, a true dramatic instinct; and much in the way of false classicism, of tedious harangue, and of childish *ἀναγνώρισις*, may be forgiven in consideration of his high success in presenting either a sharp conflict of motives, or an outburst of poignant and overpowering emotion. It matters little that the misunderstanding which gives rise to that outburst is one which the exercise of a little common-sense would have obviated, and half a minute's explanation would clear up. Everything is forgotten in the excitement of the crucial situation; and when Mérope is about to plunge the dagger into her son, we cannot pause to reflect that nothing but an inflexible determination to jump at rash conclusions has carried her to the brink of the horrid crime. In *Brutus* (1730) we have a pitched battle between patriotism and love, and again between patriotism and paternal affection; in *Zaïre* (1732) a pitched battle between love and religious devotion; in *Alzire* (1736) and *Tancrède* (1760) a pitched battle between love and filial obedience; in *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755) a pitched battle between maternal instinct and the sense of public duty, and afterwards between the sense of public duty and conjugal fidelity. The dramatic literature of no country would be disgraced by the manner in which these struggles are portrayed, or by individual scenes like that between Titus and Tullia in *Brutus*, and that between Zamti and Idamé in *L'Orphelin*. We are told by Gibbon that Voltaire's declamation was "fashioned to the pomp and cadence of the old stage," and that "he

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expressed the enthusiasm of poetry rather than the feelings of nature." The criticism may be aptly applied to his dramatic writing. Yet in spite of more than occasional frigidity, and in spite of the frank artificiality of the framework, there is an elevation of feeling, a true nobility of tone, in his tragedies which it would be culpable blindness to ignore and perversity to depreciate.

Voltaire's imitators.

In the writing of tragedy Voltaire had many rivals and imitators, from Piron, whose *Callisthène* (1730) and *Gustav Wasa* (1733) display none of his peculiar gifts, to La Harpe, who by no means confined himself to the classical model upon which his *Timoléon* (1764) is constructed. Few of them are wholly destitute of fine passages or happy moments. But there is little that is distinctive in their excellences or their shortcomings; and it is needless to discriminate minutely between the respective merits of La Chaussée's *Maximien* (1738), Gresset's *Edouard III.* (1740), Marmontel's *Aristomène* (1749), Lemierre's *Hypermnestre* (1758), Saurin's *Spartacus* (1760), and De Belloy's *Siège de Calais* (1765), that vigorous and extremely popular example of the "national" drama, for which Voltaire had given the cue in *Zaïre* and *Tancrède*. How harshly soever the works of these authors may be judged, at least they shine beside the specimens of classical tragedy produced in England during the same period.

Classical tragedy in England.

Cato had been pronounced by Voltaire, in an epistle dedicatory to Bolingbroke, to be "la seule tragédie bien écrite d'un bout à l'autre chez votre

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nation"; and every author who came up to London with nothing in his purse brought with him a tragedy which borrowed its inspiration from that highly remunerative work. To name Young's *Busiris* (1719) and *The Revenge* (1721), Thomson's *Sophonisba* (1730) and *Agamemnon* (1738), Mallet's *Eurydice* (1731), Brooke's *Gustavus Vasa* (1739), Gray's fragment, *Agrippina* (*circ.* 1742), Johnson's *Irene* (1749), and Smollett's *Regicide* (1749), is to enumerate a series of laboured efforts in a kind of writing compared with which the ploughing of the sands is a profitable occupation. Scarce one of the pieces just mentioned (and the list might be indefinitely extended [1]) deserved to win the favour of the public or did so. The only tragedy which competed successfully with Shakespeare, melodrama, and pantomime, was John Home's *Douglas* (1756), with respect to which the author's kinsman, David Hume, professed himself assured that it "will be esteemed the best, and, by French critics, the only, tragedy of our nation." But such encomiums must clearly be taken with some qualification. Home's *Douglas* was the battle-ground of "highflyers" and moderates; and not to extol its beauties was almost to proclaim oneself a "zealot."

The classical drama thus lingered on in England in a state of genteel decrepitude, until it expired of sheer inanition in the nineteenth century. In France,

[1] Here are a few more taken at haphazard from Genest: Motley's *Antiochus* (1721), Fenton's *Mariamne* (1723), West's *Hecuba* (1726), C. Johnson's *Medea*, Tracey's *Periander*, Jeffrey's *Merope* (all 1731), Mason's *Elfrida* (1752), Crisp's *Virginia* (1754), Whitehead's *Creusa* (1754), Home's *Agis* (1758), and Hoole's *Cleonice* (1775).

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its circumstances were outwardly more prosperous, despite the open enmity of La Motte. But the fatal horse was already introduced into the citadel; and Voltaire was the Thymœtes of the catastrophe. Fanatically attached to the classical tradition, he was, nevertheless, responsible for practical innovations which made its ultimate abandonment inevitable.

Voltaire's innovations.

Voltaire, to begin with, was the first to make a great matter of the spectacular element. He filled as much of the stage as was available for the purpose (for it was not until 1760 that the whole audience was confined to the front of the house) with crowds of soldiers, senators, and attendants. The stage directions of *Sémiramis* (1748) make it plain that he meant that play to be mounted in the most extravagant style; and Diderot notes with regret the lavish manner in which *L'Orphelin de la Chine* was put upon the boards. Again, Voltaire appreciably widened the local area of tragedy. In making the East the scene of *Zaïre*, he did no more than Racine had already done in *Bajazet*. But to go farther a-field, and select China and Peru for his scene of action (as he did in *L'Orphelin* and *Alzire*), was practically to admit that tragedy could no longer keep harping on the old string. His characters, to be sure, remain kings, conquerors, and noblemen, with the corresponding members of the other sex, and their appropriate *entourage;* but more of ordinary human nature may perhaps be expected in a Tartar despot or a South American cacique than can possibly be looked for in a stereotyped

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Œdipus or Agamemnon. Voltaire thus prepared the way for what, in M. Brunetière's classification, is styled "la tragédie exotique," of which Lemierre's *Guillaume Tell* (1766) and La Harpe's *Menzicoff* (1775) may be taken as examples. Once more, Voltaire deviated from his own ideal by a plentiful infusing of love into his tragedies. It is significant that *Mérope*, from which that element is ostentatiously excluded, is perhaps the finest of his dramas; and it is certain that he only yields to the effeminate taste which craves for it with profuse apologies. But he cannot withhold the attractive ingredient; and thus the characters of tragedy are brought down by many degrees towards the plane of everyday life, for love is a notorious leveller of ranks.

English influences.

Voltaire's chief contribution, however, to the overthrow of the classical dynasty consisted in his bringing Shakespeare[1] and the English dramatists to the knowledge of the French public. During his residence in England, he had learned to set a high value upon Shakespeare's writings. In the full flush of his new discovery he endeavoured to engraft upon the drama of his country some of the excellences of the Elizabethan playwright. His *Brutus*, he informs us, was "born in England." His *Mort de César* (1735) was conceived in the "goût Anglais." *Zaïre* stands admittedly in the debt of *Othello*.[2] An Englishman

[1] See *Shakespeare en France sous l'ancien régime*, by M. Jusserand in *Cosmopolis*, November 1896—February 1897.

[2] It was Amory's opinion that in his *Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le*

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may not find it easy to detect anything of the true Shakespearean touch in these pieces. But the proclamation of Voltaire's indebtedness at any rate familiarised the public with the name of his alleged creditor. In 1746 selections from Shakespeare were translated into French by La Place. Towards the close of the seventh decade of the century Ducis (1733-1816) began to turn out paraphrases of several of the plays for the French stage. Lastly, in 1776 appeared Le Tourneur's translation of the complete dramatic works: an event which exasperated the Patriarch beyond all bounds. He railed against that booby, Shakespeare, and against Shakespeare's infamous translator, with the frenzy of a madman. In vain had he attempted to check the movement by philosophical dramas like *Les Guèbres* (1769), full of vehement declamation against priests and bigots. In vain had he applauded those who sought, by a reversion to classical types and themes, to galvanise an obsolete convention into life, and to counteract the prevalent Anglomania. The mischief was done; the reign of classical tragedy was over; king, court, and people were involved in the same condemnation; and Voltaire must have felt that he was at the bottom of it all. A similar disaster had befallen in Germany. Gottsched, the great classical champion, was dis-

prophète (1741), Voltaire "pilfers from Macbeth almost every capital scene" (*John Buncle*, iii. 3). But the only really memorable thing about *Mahomet* is Voltaire's request for permission to dedicate it to the Pope, and the gracious reply of Benedict XIV. Voltaire, it may be added, had not at the time been elected of the Academy, and was desirous of conciliating every possible interest.

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credited, and had been superseded by a new school. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) delivered his attack upon Voltaire's dramatic ideals in 1767, and thenceforth Europe declined to take the classical drama seriously. But the great work of Lessing and his coadjutors must be reserved for the succeeding volume.

Decadence of the classical tradition.

Voltaire, then, involuntarily assisted the progress of the dramatic revolution. But it is improbable that he could have done much to retard it. For, in truth, the same influences were at work upon the drama as had brought the novel into existence. The desire for realism was overpowering. Classical tragedy, and classical comedy too, dwelt in a region remote from the business and the pleasures of ordinary existence. Neither afforded scope for that "plaisir de s'attendrir et de répandre des larmes," the exquisite poignancy of which was beginning to be keenly relished. Hence a new form came into being, less austere and formal than tragedy on the one hand, and more grave and humane than comedy on the other. Diderot, in classifying serious drama, inserted between the extremes of tragedy and comedy two terms which in practice often proved to be indistinguishable: "la comédie sérieuse qui a pour objet les vertus et les devoirs de l'homme," and "la tragédie qui aurait pour objet nos malheurs domestiques." (See his discourse *De la Poésie Dramatique*, addressed to Grimm in 1758.) Here we have adequate enough definitions of the "comédie larmoyante" and the "tragédie bourgeoise," which supplied the

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very sort of entertainment of which the public stood in need. An immense impetus was given to the new school of drama by Lillo's *George Barnwell* (1731), and subsequently by Moore's *Gamester* (1753), both of which found great acceptance by reason of their strong didactic and practical tendency.

Comic opera.

Comic opera, which flourished during our period with extraordinary vigour, found a home at the Opéra Comique, at the Comédie des Italiens, and at the "théâtres de la foire." Araminte, whom we have already quoted, has no doubts about the attractiveness of this form of art. *Opéra comique*, she declares, makes no appeal to the soul; but it wakes you up, puts new life into you, makes you cheerful, and carries you off your feet. These are assuredly not properties to be despised in any stage play; and it is a fact that much of the most felicitous work of the best versifiers of the day was done in the service of comic opera. Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau did not disdain its wages; and *Les muses galantes* (1747) and *Le Devin du Village* (1752) are very tolerable specimens of their class, though scarcely equal to the happiest efforts of Boissy, of Panard, of Favart, or of Sedaine; much less of Piron. For Piron, by his *Arlequin-Deucalion* (1722), killed two birds with one stone. He demonstrated to the protectionists of the State-theatre that a monologue need not necessarily be dull; and he established, once for all, his supremacy in this branch of art by producing a masterpiece of wit and satire. This supremacy was but confirmed by *L'antre de Trophonius*, *L'Endriague*,

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Le Claperman, *Le Caprice*, and other works which followed his first in rapid succession. But we have wandered from the "legitimate" drama, to which we must now return.

French comedy.

In the case of French comedy, as in that of tragedy, we observe a steady departure from those standards which the age of Louis XIV. had transmitted to its successor through the hands of Dancourt and Regnard. The average of excellence is much higher in comedy than in tragedy; but of only two works in the former kind can it be said that Molière need not have been ashamed to own them. The *Métromanie* of Piron (1738) and the *Méchant* of Gresset (1747)[1] stand forth as practically the sole representatives of comedy in the really great strain between *Turcaret* and the rise of Beaumarchais. They are comedies, not of plot, but, of character and manners; their view of life is wise and dignified, though they abound in the finest strokes of humour, and they have something of the happy freedom from petulance which marks the genius that conceived *Tartuffe*. The objects at which their satire is levelled are two familiar phases of human vanity.

La Métromanie.

La Métromanie deals with the folly of those who aspire to be "intellectual" without possessing the necessary equipment. Francaleu, the father of the heroine, is an old gentleman who has suddenly broken out into verse, and who, in the pages of *Le Mercure*, is conducting a flirtation, under an assumed female name, with Damis, a young

[1] Both in Firmin-Didot's *Chefs-d'œuvre des auteurs comiques*, vol. v.

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man, who, on his part, is prepared to sacrifice very fair prospects in life for the sake of the Muses. Both Francaleu and Damis are recalled to their senses, and the various complications of the plot ultimately unravelled, by the appearance on the scene of Baliveau, the rich uncle of the one, and the old friend of the other. The moral of the whole play is that in the realm of art there can be no tolerance for the second-rate. Better, in short, sweep a crossing than be a minor poet. This salutary lesson is pointed not so much by mercenary considerations as by those of self-respect and of the probable result of the alternative careers upon a man's character. The personages we have named are excellently drawn, without a trace of vindictiveness, and with no more than the necessary hint of exaggeration. Damis, in particular, is most dexterously and even sympathetically handled, though it would have been easy to make him both ludicrous and offensive. But Piron has contrived to avoid being callous and brutal on the one hand, and lachrymose and gushing on the other.

Le Méchant.

The foible which Gresset selected for *his* theme was the mania for fashionable life which sometimes possesses the young, and even the middle-aged and elderly. Valère, the hero, is an amiable young gentleman of property with no serious failings, but so bitten with this craze that he is ready to sacrifice his mistress and her money for the sake of *fins soupers* and kindred diversions. His interests centre in that busy society of scandal-mongers where "tout le monde est méchant et personne ne l'est." He

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conceives himself full of "l'esprit de mon siècle," and declines "me rouiller dans ma terre et borner ma fortune." As for marriage, "Fi! cela me paraît ignoble, crapuleux," unless one is old. Paris is the spot to which he instinctively turns.

"Paris est ravissant, et je crois que jamais
Les plaisirs n'ont été si nombreux, si parfaits,
Les talents plus féconds, les esprits plus aimables :
Le goût fait chaque jour des progrès incroyables ;
Chaque jour le génie et la diversité
Viennent nous enrichir de quelque nouveauté."

He has become imbued with these sentiments by Cléon, whose leading characteristic supplies the piece with its title. Cléon himself is thoroughly *blasé;* he finds the pleasures of Paris extremely tiresome; but he is full of the cant of the *philosophes*, and has no difficulty in proving to Valère's satisfaction that duty of every description is a mere convention. "Chacun n'est que pour soi" is his motto, and by dint of a little seasonable ridicule he keeps Valère in the way in which he should not go. Ultimately, the duplicity of Cléon is exposed, and Valère returns to reason and to Chloé. The real interest of the play lies in the attack upon the life of Paris. So set is Gresset upon pursuing this topic, that, with perhaps less good judgment than Piron would have shown, he puts his strongest condemnation of the capital into the mouth of Cléon himself. But the assault is not grossly overdone; and there is no anticipation of the fanaticism of Jean-Jacques. In point of wit, elegance of versification, and technical skill, there is little to choose between

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La Métromanie and *Le Méchant*. The latter, however, contains more lines which have passed into the common fund of quotations; while *La Métromanie* is, upon the whole, the more gay. Piron never accomplished anything else in comedy so good; his *Fils Ingrats* (1728) is unquestionably inferior; his burlesques, or comic operas, fall within another category. As for Gresset, after returning to his monastery, he issued thence a violent diatribe against the stage, and by so doing afforded to Voltaire and Piron the opportunity of avenging any wounds which *Le Méchant* may have left rankling in their breasts.

General characteristics.

The writers who keep more or less closely to the old high-road of comedy are all didactic in purpose and middle-class in sentiment. The social duel between the *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie* seems ever present to their minds, and is rarely absent from their plays. The nobleman who would repair his shattered fortunes by marrying into the family of the wealthy citizen, and the members of that family who are dazzled by his rank and conciliated by his condescension, are favourite types of character. Good sense almost always triumphs in the long-run. The deluded heroine and her ambitious mamma recover their judgment. The deserving, though poor, young man, who has been rudely thrown over, is restored to their good graces. The Marquis is dismissed with ignominy. At the same time the hero's man-servant is made happy by the hand of the heroine's woman. And all these desirable results are usually brought about through the agency of an opulent uncle of bluff

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manners, but extreme benevolence. The most *bourgeois* touch of all is seldom wanting. The family which owes its prosperity to trade or business turns out to be in reality a branch of some noble house which has fallen on evil days—ruined, most probably, by a *procès*—and which has nobly set itself to the task of retrieving its loss of wealth and consequence by means of honest toil. The constant recurrence of the *procès* in French comedy bears eloquent testimony to the part played in the economy of French society by the legal profession; a part second in importance (if the dramatists may be trusted) only to that of the domestic servant of both sexes. The *laquais* and the *fille de chambre* are indispensable. It is not merely that they announce visitors, volunteer pert remarks, and make love to one another. They continue so to do in most countries down to the present day. But the evolution of the plot is positively unable to proceed without their aid, and their presence could no more be excused than that of their masters and mistresses. Diderot protested against all this, contending that, if the servants were only left in an ante-chamber, the real action of the play would be much more interesting. But we may at least urge in extenuation of a sorely overworked convention, that it was made the pretext for a good deal of pointed satire, and tolerable wit.

Destouches.

The most eminent representative of the class of writers with whom we are now dealing is Philippe Néricault Destouches (1680-1754). He started on his dramatic career with *Le*

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Curieux Impertinent (1710), and improved upon that in *L'Irrésolu* three years later. But it was not until after his return from England, whither he had gone in the train of the Abbé Dubois, that he rose to the height of his powers, though no English influence is perceptible in his treatment of character, or in his rhymed Alexandrines. *Le Philosophe marié* (1727) cannot be said to have a very convincing fable. The desire of the hero to keep his marriage concealed at all costs, for fear of incurring the ridicule of his friends, as well as the displeasure of his relations, may be accepted with an effort; but that he should have lived under the same roof with his wife for a considerable period without the rest of the household (one servant alone excepted) being a bit the wiser, is scarcely credible. Yet the play contains many well-contrived and highly diverting scenes. The intrigue is well developed from its postulates; and the piece is none the worse that the philosopher finally throws off his affectations, proves that he possesses some of the virtues of which he loves to converse, and, in short, stands revealed by no means a bad fellow. The strongest character in the piece is Géronte, a rough diamond of the type we have referred to, whose brusque and downright bearing contrasts effectively with the gentler manners of the other personages. *Le Glorieux* (1732) is as good as *Le Philosophe marié*, or perhaps better. The Comte de Tufière, whose leading characteristic gives the piece its name, is conceived in the true spirit of Molière, and so is Pasquin his valet. One is disposed, indeed,

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to regret that poetical justice is baulked of her prey in the long-run. But the author should not be blamed too severely for a fault which history attributes to the characteristic vanity of the actor who was cast for the principal part. The great merit of Destouches is his excellent common-sense. His ambition was to approximate to what he considered the true pattern of comedy; and this ambition he realised with a success far from despicable. To say that he is habitually decent in tone is to single him out for no special distinction. It is a remarkable, but none the less certain, fact, that the whole of the French comedy of our period—or at least all of it which is worth considering as literature—is scrupulously void of offence, without being in the least puritanical or prudish. The conjugal no less than the parental relation enjoys an enviable immunity from serious attack.

The works of the other writers of this school need not be discussed with any particularity. We may content ourselves with naming *Le Babillard* (1725) and *Le Français à Londres* (1727) of Boissy (1694-1758); *L'École des Bourgeois* (1728) of D'Allainval (1701?-1753), a variation of a familiar theme; *Le Rendez-vous* (1733) and *La Pupille* (1734) of Fagan (1702-1755), the former, an amusing piece in one act, in which the audacity of the domestic servant reaches its acme, the latter, an extremely graceful and pleasing little sketch, which David Garrick subsequently transferred to the English stage; *Les Mœurs du Tems* (1760) of Saurin (1706-1781), who also

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adapted Moore's *chef-d'œuvre* under the title of *Beverlei* (1768); and *Le Cercle* (1764) of Poinsinet (1735-1769). Nor would it be pardonable to omit all mention here of the work in which Carlo Goldoni endeavoured to repay his heavy debt to the French stage. In his task of reconstructing the comedy of Italy, he had, as we venture to believe, drawn his inspiration from Molière; and in 1771, having chosen France for the country of his adoption, he produced a comedy in three acts, modelled upon his master, in that master's language. *Le Bourru bienfaisant*, which was played at the Théâtre-français, was greeted with the applause it deserved, irrespective altogether of considerations of international politeness. Few, however, of the characters remain fixed in the memory save the irascible, rich, and goodhearted uncle, whose portrait is one of the most spirited and life-like in that familiar line of art. It is difficult to draw any line of distinction between the pieces we have enumerated except that some are in verse and others in prose. Prose, of course, tends more and more to gain the upper hand; but it brings no change of sentiment with it. Wit, dexterity, and grasp of character in its obvious aspects seem to have been bestowed upon all those writers in nearly equal shares; while, in point of tone and feeling, their works might all have proceeded from the same pen. Rarely, if ever, is their art turned to the gratification of personal resentment. Palissot's *Les philosophes* (1760) and Voltaire's *L'Écossaise*, which was the instant retort to it, are the chief exceptions to the general

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rule. Both pieces are as amusing as they are scurrilous; but neither faction was entitled to inveigh against the other on the score of bad taste. Traces of "sensibility" are discoverable in some of the plays which happen to be later in date, as, for example, in the *Marchand de Smyrne* (1770) of Chamfort (1741-1793). But the most penetrating eye will not detect much indication of the novel forces which came into play early in the second quarter of the century, and which must now be considered.

Of the two great contemporary innovators upon French comedy, La Chaussée wielded a power much more striking in its immediate effects, Marivaux an influence much more subtle and durable. After a few preliminary "false starts," which included the tragedy of *Annibal*, Marivaux,[1] as we have said, found a suitable field for the cultivation of his peculiar talents, and the list of his dramatic pieces, between thirty and forty in number, vouches for the diligence with which he worked it. A few of his plays are "féeries," like *Arlequin poli par l'amour* (1720), but by far the greater number are comedies. *Le Legs* (1736), one of his most popular pieces, was produced at the house of Molière, but the rest of his really good work — *La première surprise de l'amour* (1722), *La double inconstance* (1723), *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard* (1730), *La Mère confidente* (1735), and *Les fausses confidences* (1737) — found a more congenial home at the Comédie Italienne.

Marivaux.

It is not the absence of the humorous element

[1] *Théâtre choisi de Marivaux*, 1 vol., Paris: 1833.

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which distinguishes Marivaux' comedies from those of his rivals. On the contrary, they abound with entertainment, and their wit is often brilliant. Madame Argante's, "qu'il soit votre mari tant qu'il vous plaira; mais il ne sera jamais mon gendre," is memorable enough; and the footmen and ladies' maids have almost a superabundance of smart repartee. The great feature of Marivaux as a dramatist is that he is at once more natural, and more artificial, than the writers who endeavoured to copy the classical model. He consistently employed prose, in preference to verse; nor did he depend for his effects upon such crude contrasts as that between the *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie*. His characters move on much the same plane of life which he himself had successfully invaded; and thus his lords and ladies are treated like human beings, and not like monsters of extravagance and insolence whom chance or necessity has driven into an unaccustomed world. His plays are not written to expose some particular failing, and the absence of a predominating characteristic leaves room for that mixture of foibles which is the rule rather than the exception in ordinary life. On the other hand, the atmosphere of his plays is one generated by a fundamentally sophisticated society. His personages disdain the simplicity and frankness which have always characterised the apolaustic type of aristocracy. Self-examination is everybody's pastime; and the critical moments of the action are indicated by exclamations like Silvia's "Ah! je vois clair dans mon cœur!" Love is the theme on which Marivaux

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plays all his variations; but we miss the ring of genuine passion, of straightforward affection, which we are sometimes able to catch in Destouches.

His heroines, their attendants, and even the subsidiary womankind, are never tired of exhibiting the waves of emotion and the cross-currents of feeling which sweep through their bosoms. They are not so tedious as Marianne, and it is only fair to Marivaux to admit that his females are vastly more interesting than those who do duty in the average comedy of the period. They possess individuality, and, though all are more or less coquettes, they are not cast in the same mould. Meticulous psychology is, perhaps, more adapted to the closet than to the stage, and Marivaux has made his influence felt more powerfully in fiction than behind the footlights. Yet it may justly be said that no subsequent dramatist has probed deeper in a certain type of female character, and that not the most psychological, or metaphysical, of latter-day playwrights has placed upon the stage a heroine comparable for vivacity and charm to Araminte or Silvia.

La Chaussée and the "comédie larmoyante."

The methods of Pierre Claude Nivelle de la Chaussée (1692-1754) were primitive and clumsy compared with those of Marivaux. His business was to afford the public an opportunity of indulging in the luxury of tears, and he was not fastidious enough to care if he attained his end by homely devices. He was roughly attacked for thus degrading the comic muse. Piron directed some of his best epigrams against

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him; and La Chaussée, in return, successfully resisted Piron's admission to the Academy. Voltaire asserted that the business of comedy is to make "les honnêtes gens" laugh, and that La Chaussée's works were neither good comedy nor good tragedy. Voltaire's theory was more rigid than his practice. He admits having written the kind of comedy called "attendrissante"; and the gulf between "attendrissante" and "larmoyante" is surely neither very wide nor very deep.

To all such criticism La Chaussée paid little heed, preferring to study the taste of his patron, the public. The bulk of his work is small compared with that of Marivaux; but its popularity was certainly not inferior. The better part of it comprises *La fausse antipathie* (1733), *Le préjugé à la mode* (1735), which owes a great deal to the *Philosophe marié* of Destouches, *Melanide* (1741), the most genuinely affecting of his dramas, *L'École des Mères* (1744), and *La Gouvernante* (1747). These are all written in verse; abound with sentiments in the Joseph Surface vein; and, altogether, are extremely didactic and improving. The advice given by Madame Argant to her husband in *L'École des Mères* would have been aptly given to their creator: "Discourez un peu moins, et montrez vous plus sage." His plots are not convincing, nor did he add anything valuable to the conventions of his art. He possessed a certain amount of wit, and was not without some skill in the delineation of character,—witness Durval and Argant in *Le préjugé à la mode*, and young Sain-

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ville in *Melanide*. But tears were his chief contribution to French comedy; and his works possess little living interest for a world which has outgrown the ingenuous artifices he employed to stir up emotion. They share, however, with many other French comedies of our period, the far from contemptible merit of being readable.

Diderot.

The comedy of tears found a champion in Diderot, who wrote on no topic better than on the drama. His famous *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* shows the intense interest he took in the purely histrionic side of the stage, and, coming from the pen of an unblushing sentimentalist, is a striking refutation of the maxim, *Si vis me flere*. Nothing connected with the representation of a piece was too trivial for Diderot to notice. He protests vehemently against the elaborate mounting of plays. Let the room in which the action takes place be that of a man of taste: "point de magots: peu de dorure: des mœubles simples." Abandoning the wise reticence which had reduced stage-directions to a minimum, he expands and elaborates them with a view to assist the actor, rather than to inform the reader of what he is too dull to guess, or the author too lazy to impart by the appropriate means. But it is impossible to pronounce *Le fils naturel* (1757) or *Le père de famille* (1758) a success from either a dramatic or a literary point of view. That Diderot was not wholly without the practical stage instinct is plain from the vigorous sketch of the Commandeur in the later play. Unfortunately, what gift he had in this direction is swallowed up in

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tears and talk. The characters speak a spasmodic language, punctuated freely with marks of exclamation and dashes. Even the lovers talk "philosophy"; and the whole drift of the dialogue is intolerably edifying, as Diderot understood edification. M. d'Orbesson, the hero of the *Père de Famille*, is a combination of Mr Turveydrop and Mr Pecksniff. Unimpeachable sentiments drop from his mouth upon all topics. But marriage is the one which provokes his most unctuous sallies. It is then, "O lien sacré des époux! Si je pense à vous mon âme s'échauffe et s'élève," and "O noms tendres de fils et de filles! Je ne vous prononçai jamais sans tressaillir, sans être touché." It is some atonement for his offences that he describes the probable consequences of an imprudent alliance in terms which seem to come red-hot from the furnace of Diderot's own experience.

His pet theories.

Diderot endeavoured to give effect in his plays to three favourite theories of his own. In the first place, the drama should be a great educational medium, and should inculcate a high morality. "Ce ne sont pas des mots que je veux remporter du théâtre." In the second place, the drama should be "natural," and the relegation of the lackeys and ladies' maids to their proper places is the first great means to this end. In the third place, the comedy of *character*, being obsolete, must be replaced by the comedy of *status*. The business of a serious play is to take a man in a certain rank of life, and exhibit the duties which attach to it, the tempt-

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ations which assail it, and the relations with society which it necessarily involves. Hence the *Père de Famille*. It would be rash to say that, given the dramatic instinct, any theory, however absurd on the surface, cannot be successfully carried into practice. That Diderot failed to do justice to his own principles may, however, be safely affirmed. Even *George Barnwell*, for which he entertained a characteristically excessive admiration, is a better acting-play than either of his own. But the distinction of accomplishing in a workmanlike manner what Diderot only fumbled at belongs to Michel-Jean Sedaine (1719-1797), who survives as the author of two prose comedies, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*[1] (1765) and *La Gageure imprévue* (1768). The latter is not so much in the lachrymose vein, being indeed gay and animated enough. But in the former we have all the elements of *bourgeois* drama. M. Vanderk, the successful man of business who comes of an old territorial house, is the ideal heavy father of sentimental comedy. In his transactions with M. Desparville, it is true, he scarcely displays the qualities we expect in the *bonus paterfamilias* of the civilians; and, if he had conducted all his business on the same footing, his strong box had been much less snugly lined than it was. But he is essentially the "show man" of his class, and the blue blood which circulates in his veins does not prevent him from denouncing

Sedaine.

[1] It may perhaps be mentioned that (by accident, probably, rather than design) this play appears in the printed catalogue of the Advocates' Library (*s.v.* "Sedaine") as *Le Philosophe sans le savon!*

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the duello as "préjugé funeste! abus cruel du point d'honneur!"

Sedaine cannot be called a great dramatist, but he is the most respectable of those who practised the middle-class drama. La Harpe in his *Mélanie* (1770) mingled with it the discussion of questions of casuistry, and attacks on the established system of religion, which pleased Voltaire, and postponed the successful performance of the play until after the Revolution. But the most that is to be said for La Harpe in the capacity of playwright is that he is decidedly superior to Mercier[1] (1740-1814), a prolific hack, who turned out an adaptation of Shakespeare (*Les tombeaux de Verone*), several semi-classical, semi-historical tragedies, and a number of melodramas, including a version of Lillo's masterpiece under the title of *Jenneval, ou le Barnevelt Français* (1769). Mercier was an avowed disciple of La Chaussée, Diderot, and Sedaine, and their dramatic ideals are faithfully copied or caricatured in his dreary and absurd pages. Yet he was successful, and he himself tells us of the firm hold which the *tragédie bourgeoise* had taken of the French provinces. People said, "Voilà ce qu'il faut offrir à nos enfans, à nos sœurs, à nos femmes." Its domestic attractions notwithstanding, we feel it a relief to quit its enervating and oppressive atmosphere for the purer and more bracing air of satirical comedy. We hail the appearance of Beaumarchais with profound thankfulness, and leave him with regret to be dealt with in the following volume.

[1] *Œuvres*, 4 vols., Amsterdam: 1778.

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British drama.

The British drama of the eighteenth century offers little to flatter the national vanity (except in point of bulk), when the comedy of the Revolution is past and done with. We have seen that as regards tragedy it was merely futile. At the other extremity matters were rather better. Pantomime, the chief purveyor of which was John Rich, enjoyed a liberal share of popular patronage. But pieces like *The Necromancer* (1724), founded on the perennial theme of Dr Faustus, or *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1739), were palpably inferior to the corresponding productions of the French stage. On a much higher plane, the immense success of *The Beggar's Opera* (1727) was responsible for a swarm of imitations. Comic opera, or "burletta," attracted many writers, and the practice of interpolating songs into comedy or farce, which is illustrated in Fielding's *Intriguing Chambermaid* (1733), gained a strong hold upon the affections of the public. But here again the average merit of such works as men like Charles Coffey and Robert Lloyd produced is almost as palpably below the average in France as the best of them are below Gay's witty and delightful piece. Bickerstaff's *Maid of the Mill* (1765), the most representative of the whole class, may excel the "musical comedy" of a later date in coherence and intelligibility, but it cannot be said to have much positive merit.

The deficiency of invention and originality so conspicuous in this period of our drama was made good partly by vamping the plays of Shakespeare and other seventeenth century dramatists, and partly by in-

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cessant drafts upon the French theatre. The only entry on the other side of the dramatic account with France which our period can show is the melodrama, or *tragédie bourgeoise*, one of the earliest attempts in which kind is Aaron Hill's *Fatal Extravagance* (1721), in some sort a forerunner of the *Gamester*. Ten years later, George Lillo (1693-1739), a respectable Londoner of Dutch extraction, produced a play which moved the whole of Europe to admiration, charmed Diderot and Rousseau, and fortified Lessing in his revolt against the classical drama. To us *The London Merchant, or the History of George Barnwell* (1731), seems absurd from beginning to end. Its style is infamous, and its prose falls regularly into the cadence of bad blank verse. Its sole merit is that, although the action is supposed to take place in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the author makes no attempt to be Elizabethan. The characters are dull and prosy; and George, the hero, is indeed no better than the "whining, preposterous, canting villain" that Millwood calls him. Thorowgood and Truman are consummate bores, and their disquisitions on the state of British commerce are more suited to a text-book of political economy than to a play. Yet as a "document" the piece has great value. Lillo takes up the challenge of the writers of classical comedy, and shows himself resolved that, in the conflict between the fashionable and the commercial class, the east side of Temple Bar shall not, if he can help it, come off second best. "As the name of merchant never degrades the gentleman, so by no

Melodrama.

Lillo's George Barnwell.

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means does it exclude him;[1] only take heed not to purchase the character of complaisant at the expense of your sincerity." Thus the egregious Thorowgood, a pillar, doubtless, of the "mercantile system"; and the speech strikes the keynote of the play.

Lillo never repeated his great success, though *Fatal Curiosity* (1736) had considerable vogue, and is better than its predecessor. Neither, however, can be compared for one moment as a dramatic composition with *The Gamester* (1753) of Edward Moore (1712-1757), who had previously tempted fortune on the stage with his *Foundling* (1748). The *Gamester* is emphatically "stagey"; Stukeley and his satellites are unquestionably "steep"; the dialogue is stilted; and the familiar tags of British melodrama—such as, "But hush! here he comes. I must dissemble"—are all there. Yet Moore has given us striking situations handled with no inconsiderable power; and we can well believe that with Garrick as Beverley, and Mrs Pritchard as his injured wife, the play was impressive and affecting. It exercised an influence over Europe second only to that of *George Barnwell;* but it was equally barren of notable descendants in the direct line in its native country. *The Stranger* and *Lovers' Vows* derive from it through the German; Holcroft's *Road to Ruin* is perhaps the only play worth naming which drew from it an immediate inspiration.

Moore's Gamester.

[1] Compare Mr Sterling's sentiment in *The Clandestine Marriage:* "An English merchant is the most respectable character in the universe."

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When we turn to English comedy and compare it with French, one thing strikes the attention *in limine* as not without significance. A perusal of the list of *dramatis personæ* suggests that in dexterity and neatness the English writers are wofully behindhand. The French, telling the tale only in the titles, are content to move in a perpetual but amply sufficient circle of Gerontes and Lucilles, of Amarinthes and Dorantes, of Lubins and Lisettes. They seek no extraneous aid in developing the idiosyncracy of their personages from any preliminary advertisement. The English, on the other hand, corruptly following Ben Jonson, must needs trumpet forth the chief characteristic of all their puppets. It is easy to guess the ruling passion of a Guzzle, a Graspall, a Gaylove, a Sotmore, or a Moneylove. Sir Patrick Noodle intimates imbecility as plainly as Sir Nicholas Ninnyhammer. Squeezum is as manifestly a trading justice as Haughty and Conundrum are fellows of a college; and he must indeed be dense who fails to smoke Tradewell for a merchant, Grogram for a mercer, Latitat for an attorney, and Capias for a bumbailiff. Nightshade and Croker are as likely to be optimists as is Sir Avarice Pedant to be wise and generous, Sir Anthony Absolute to be complacent, or Sir Captious Whiffle to have common-sense. One can only marvel that even the silliest of young fellows should suffer himself to be bubbled out of a fortune by companions who bear the tell-tale names of Rook, Shark, and M'Shuffle.

English comedy.

More important than the predilection for this in-

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fantile device is the decided inferiority of English comedy to French in point of decency. During the first years of our period the British stage was both gross and immoral. The tradition of Revolution comedy died hard, and no writer had the skill to reproduce the moral vacuum appropriate to Congreve's characters. The comedies of Fielding,[1] for example, are nearly inexcusable. The *Tragedy of Tragedies* (1731), it is true, is an admirable effort in the mock-heroic vein, though not much superior to the *Chrononhotonthologos* (1734) of Henry Carey, immortalised by *Sally in our Alley*. The *Pasquin* (1736), again, is unworthy neither of its precursor, *The Rehearsal*, nor of its successor, *The Critic*. But what is to be said for *The Coffee-House Politician* (1730), or *The Letter-Writers* (1731), or *The Modern Husband* (1732), or *The Universal Gallant* (1735), or the other pieces in which he prostituted his genius? They have wit, and some of the characters —like Lady Charlotte, for example—are not ill-drawn. But, on the whole, they are monuments of brutal indecency. It was a lucky day for Fielding and for literature when the Licensing Act divorced his genius for ever from the drama.

Its comparative grossness.

That the morals of the stage were improved by this piece of legislation is unquestionable. Smollett, as we have seen, was the reverse of squeamish, and he had no scruples about giving the public what he supposed it to want. It is the more significant that *The*

[1] *Works*, ed. Roscoe. 1 vol., 1848, where all his dramas will be found.

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Reprisal (1757)[1] in no way resembles the stuff which Fielding had been turning out between twenty and thirty years before, but, on the contrary, is a perfectly harmless, if by no means brilliant, bit of work. Yet, although after 1739 we are no longer compelled in the pursuit of comedy to haunt bagnios, and to associate with the vilest of their species, some remnants of the old tradition lingered on. Two social phenomena formed the groundwork of the comedy of the time: the one, the conflict between the town, in the sense of fashionable London, and the country; the other, the conflict between the City and the West End. Both, but particularly the latter, furnished materials for time-honoured jokes which playgoers were apparently unwilling to let die. The liability of the doting citizen who resided in Cornhill or Mincing Lane to be betrayed by his handsome wife is laboured with a perseverance which has no counterpart in the contemporary comedy of France. Conjugal fidelity, in effect, is as much the staple of wit as it became the staple of intrigue in French drama during the following century.[2]

Waiving the objection just specified, to which nearly all the comedy of the period is more or less open, let us consider what pieces still cling to the skirts of

[1] Smollett's *Works*, ed. Anderson, 1820, vol. iii.

[2] It must be noted that what is said in the text as to the superior decency of the French drama is only applicable to the plays intended for *public* performance. The plays written for production in private were often characterised by gross licentiousness, not always redeemed by wit, as in the case of Collé's *La Verité dans le Vin*—an amusing, but far from edifying, trifle.

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literature and of the living drama. The list will not be a long one. In the region of farce, Samuel Foote (1720-1777)[1] holds a prominent position with *The Minor* (1760) and *The Liar* (1762), two works from which a good deal of amusement may still be extracted. Foote must yield, however, in riotous animal spirits to James Townley (1714-1778), whose *High Life Below Stairs* (1759), though now rarely seen upon the boards, survives at least in name. Arthur Murphy (1727-1805)[2] could be extravagant and personal enough in his humorous sallies, as *The Apprentice* (1756), *The Spouter* (1756), and *The Upholsterer* (1757) testify. But his best performance (for his tragedies go for nothing) aims a little higher, and contrives to come tolerably near the mark. *Three Weeks after Marriage* (1776) exhibits with considerable point the contrast between the manners of the City and the Court; the retired merchant who has a "country seat" three miles out of London, and clips his hedges into the similitude of a Lord Mayor's banquet, is a decidedly happy embodiment of a hackneyed type; and the squabbling of Sir Charles Racket and his lady over the momentous question, whether the former ought to have led a club or a diamond at a critical moment, is rendered with a vivacity and spirit which should commend it to an age that loves "bridge."

Murphy.

Charles Macklin (1697-1797) is remembered as having been an actor of extraordinary excellence in some parts, notably in that of Sir Pertinax Mac-

[1] *Works*, 4 vols., 1778. [2] *Ibid.*, 7 vols., 1786.

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Sycophant in his own comedy, *The Man of the World* (1766). The name of the Scotch knight is perhaps deficient in subtlety; but the piece stands, along with Colman's *Clandestine Marriage* and Cumberland's *Brothers*, in the front rank of the comedies of the period—those of Goldsmith and Sheridan being, of course, left out of account. George Colman the elder (1732-1794),[1] besides being a successful manager, was a playwright blessed with a strong sense of fun, and a stock of learning sufficient for the execution of a very fair translation of the works of Terence (1765). Some of his pieces, like *Polly Honeycombe* (1760) and *The Oxonian in Town* (1767), belong rather to farce than to comedy. Others, like *The Jealous Wife* (1761) and *The Man of Business* (1774), distinctly incline to the side of comedy. In his masterpiece, *The Clandestine Marriage* (1766), he had the co-operation of Garrick. The hero and heroine are not particularly interesting; but it is impossible not to be amused by the "smart" aspirations of Mrs Heidelberg, the vulgar widow of a Dutch merchant. No one can accuse Colman's humour of ever being recondite or far-fetched. But at least it is genuine as far as it goes; his good nature is unimpeachable; and he is commendably free from sentiment.

Colman.

Sentiment, on the other hand, pervades most of the thirty-seven plays which Richard Cumberland (1732-1811) produced during a protracted career of literary activity. His personal *traits* have been embalmed for posterity in the

Cumberland and sentimental comedy.

[1] *Dramatic Works*, 4 vols., 1777.

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character of Sir Fretful Plagiary. His literary characteristics have been summed up in a much more kindly spirit in *Retaliation*, though "the Terence of England" as applied to him shows something less than Goldsmith's usual felicity of epithet. Some of Cumberland's best known work, such as *The Wheel of Fortune* (1795), lies beyond our proper limits. But it is not essentially different in workmanship or tone from *The Brothers* (1769), *The West Indian* (1771), or *The Choleric Man* (1774). Cumberland has plenty of humour, and some facility in devising situations. His foible is a proneness to put sweeping maxims with regard to life and morals into the mouths of his characters, without inquiry into their aptness or relevancy. He never can resist firing a shot at any custom or institution which he dislikes or disapproves of; and his hits at the Game Laws in *The Choleric Man* remain more deeply imbedded in the memory than either its plot or its personages. Yet this weakness in Cumberland is tempered by a certain amount of natural taste and the results of a good education. To see sentimental comedy at its worst we must repair to the plays of Hugh Kelly (1739-1777), of which *False Delicacy* (1768) is a typical specimen. The dialogue is unnatural;[1] the characters are long-winded; and the whole play is enveloped in an atmosphere of bad-breeding, which it is more easy to perceive than to describe. Sentimental comedy

Kelly.

[1] *E.g.*, Colonel Rivers to his daughter: "In the doting hours of paternal blandishment I have often promised you a fortune of £20,000 whenever you changed your situation."

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deserves no thanks of ours except for provoking that brilliant though short-lived outburst of reaction which closed the last chapter of our literary history in which acting drama plays any part.

The change which had taken place in public taste during the preceding quarter of a century or so is significantly illustrated by the reception accorded, on its first performance, to the most richly humorous scene in Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man* (1768).[1] It would have been well had Fielding's comedies never brought upon the stage any character less respectable or more odious than a bailiff. Now, the introduction of such "low" personages was almost enough to damn the play, and the offending scene had subsequently to be expunged to soothe the genteel susceptibilities of the pit. Yet Goldsmith's return to nature was no return to brutality, or indecency, or squalor. Every line glows with a fine humanity; and he attacks insincerity and affectation with a ridicule which even his victims could hardly take in bad part. Young Honeywood, it must be owned, like many another hero, is not the chief attraction of the play. But Miss Richland, in her own way, is at least the equal of Miss Hardcastle; Croaker and his wife are an admirably contrasted couple; while Lofty, the glory of the piece, is one of those types of character for delineating which Goldsmith had a peculiar aptitude. It is generally agreed, however, that *She Stoops to Conquer; or, the Mistakes of a Night* (1773), is superior to its elder brother; and, if superior

Goldsmith's revolt.

[1] *Works*, ed. Prior, 1837, vol. iv.

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power of holding the stage be any test of merit, that view is not to be gainsaid. It is certainly free from the faint suggestion of sentiment which emerges now and then in *The Good-natured Man*, and few things in comedy are more diverting than the consequences of the mistake on which the plot hinges. Mr Hardcastle's portrait is perhaps the finest in Goldsmith's dramatic gallery. Tony Lumpkin's may carry more votes; yet it seems to want the finer strokes which are to be detected in the other. But it is difficult, and, it may be hoped, superfluous, to dissect a work of which every fresh perusal gives unabated pleasure. As well bring a suspicious and coldly analytical mind to the review of old friends, old times, old manners, and old wine, as to the consideration of this delightful play.

Sheridan.

The crusade against sentimental comedy was taken up with redoubled vigour shortly after Goldsmith's death by Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan[1] (1751-1816). With the exception of *Pizarro*, a tragedy of no great merit, which did not appear until 1799, Sheridan's dramatic works were all produced in the brief interval between 1775 and 1779. We need say nothing of *St Patrick's Day*, a rollicking farce, of *The Duenna*, a comic opera, or of *A Trip to Scarborough*, which is simply a bowdlerised version of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*. He stands or falls by *The Rivals* (1775), *The School for Scandal* (1777), and *The Critic* (1779).

[1] *Works*, 1 vol., 1900; *Memoirs*, by Thomas Moore, 2 vols., 1825; *Sheridan*, by Mrs Oliphant (E.M.L.), 1883.

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Sheridan's outline is sharper and better defined than Goldsmith's; his technique more elaborate and more obtrusive; his colour more striking and more cold; and in tone and method generally he approximates more closely to classical comedy. In construction he leaves something to be desired; and he lacks that artless touch of human nature of which Goldsmith had the command. Yet his faults seem to disappear when we recall the extraordinary brilliance of his dialogue, and the pungency of his wit. To call in question his ethical standards is as irrelevant as it is to complain of his superficial psychology. No doubt, the good-heartedness of Charles Surface is as cheap and thin a virtue as that of Honeywood. But it is a grievous mistake to suppose that in *The School for Scandal* Sheridan set himself to lash hypocrisy. Joseph Surface belongs to a very different category from Tartuffe or Mr Pecksniff. He is a satire, not upon one of the most detestable of human vices, but merely, upon a passing phase of affectation. He is not the canting hypocrite; he is but the stock-hero of sentimental comedy, just as, in *The Rivals*, Lydia Languish, Falkland, and Julia are counterparts of personages familiar to the patrons of that singular form of art. To play Joseph Surface seriously is to strike a jarring note, to convert what is truly a coherent whole into a disagreeable chaos.

Of his three great plays, *The School for Scandal* is that in which Sheridan seems to have put forth a supreme effort; and perhaps for that very reason *The Rivals* has been found by some more agreeable and less

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artificial. But in point of ease and spontaneity, as well as in the capacity of provoking mirth, it may be doubted whether *The Critic* is not the first in merit as it was the last in time. It is seldom played on the modern stage, and, when it is, is so defaced by "gagging" that much of its virtue evaporates. Yet nowhere does the flame of Sheridan's wit burn with a more ardent intensity. And thus English comedy which was also literature made a brilliant and striking departure from the world. It is easy for modern playwrights, who have picked up most of what they know from Sheridan, to scoff at his primitive workmanship and his want of fidelity to nature. Such reflections proceed from a want of intelligence. Sheridan only appears to fall short of the highest standard of the comedy of manners when we compare his achievement with the matchless art of Congreve. Certain it is, that, since the production of *The Critic*, the living drama in England has ceased to have anything to do with the higher walks of literature. Tragedies have been produced by poets great and small, but they are unplayable, and ought to have remained unplayed. Melodramas and comedies have run for thousands of nights, yet in print prove obstinately unreadable. Goldsmith and Sheridan at least interposed to check a tendency already in full operation, and to intercept for the benefit of the stage a portion of the talent which the course of events was inexorably driving in the direction of the novel.

The end of British drama as literature.

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CHAPTER VII.

HISTORY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY.

REVIVAL OF HISTORY — FRENCH SCHOOL OF HISTORIANS — ROLLIN — ENGLISH HISTORIANS — ENGLISH COMPILERS — VOLTAIRE AS AN HISTORIAN — HIS 'ESSAI SUR LES MŒURS' — CONTRAST BETWEEN VOLTAIRE AND VICO — HUME'S 'HISTORY OF ENGLAND' — HUME'S HISTORICAL STYLE — ROBERTSON — GIBBON — HIS ATTITUDE TO "ENTHUSIASM" — HIS STYLE — GREATNESS OF 'THE DECLINE AND FALL' — RISE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY — THE PHYSIOCRATS — DOCTRINES OF THE PHYSIOCRATS — QUESNAY — TURGOT — THE ELDER MIRABEAU — GALIANI — ADAM SMITH — HIS DEBT TO HUME — MERITS OF 'THE WEALTH OF NATIONS' — ITS INFLUENCE.

IF the eighteenth century witnessed a marked decadence in poetry and the drama, it was responsible for the revival of one long neglected branch of prose literature as well as the virtual creation of another. Since the time of Tacitus, history, in the full sense of the word, had almost ceased to exist. There had been chroniclers with little critical instinct, and chroniclers in whom the very absence of the sceptical spirit had enhanced a natural faculty for engaging narrative. But the combination of sagacity in ascertaining facts with the talent of presenting

Revival of History.

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them when mentioned was extremely rare. There are, of course, exceptions to the general rule. Italy had produced a Machiavelli, England a Clarendon, and France a Bossuet. The famous *Discours* of the latter may perhaps be more properly classified as oratory than history. It is set as to its form, for it taught men how a moral principle might be followed through events extending over a vast period of time, and how a multiplicity of details might be combined, without confusion, in the comprehensive whole. Later historians might prefer not to take the explanatory principle of history for granted; but they learned from Bossuet an adequate conception of the literary ideal which their art should set before it.

French school of historians.

In France during the eighteenth century the honourable tradition of labour in historical research was, for the most part, well maintained. The religious orders displayed a persistency in the good work which, in the judgment of a *philosophe*, should have atoned for many merely moral shortcomings. To work like a Benedictine was a phrase expressive of the highest degree of industry. The names of many such inquirers[1] are now forgotten; but we may safely assert that, in regard to ancient history, at all events, they paved the way for some of the most brilliant scholars of the succeeding century. The numerous contributions of Nicholas Fréret (1688-1749) to chronology, mythology, and geography, were of substantial and permanent value;

[1] See Flint, *Philosophy of History*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: 1893. Vol. I. 244 *et seq.*

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the controversial writings of De Pouilly, Sallier, and Beaufort, threw light upon the principles of weighing historical evidence; and the ten handsome quartos which contain Montfaucon's *L'Antiquité Expliquée* (1719-1724) would do credit to any age in virtue as well of their erudition as of their excellent engravings. Towards the end of our period, unhappily, this type of honest work is supplanted by one as much more ambitious as it is less admirable. History becomes the tool of faction; and the lessons it affords are employed for the purpose of pointing a very doubtful moral. Of those who made it subservient to their favourite theories, the Abbé de Mably (1709-1785), Condillac's brother, is a fair example. His *Entretiens de Phocion* (1763) and his *Observations sur l'histoire de la France* (1765) are not without force or merit; but they add little to our knowledge or understanding of the ages with which they profess to be concerned.

A work like Sainte Palaye's *Mémoires sur l'ancienne Chevalerie* (1759-81), so significant of reviving interest in what is "mediæval and gothic," is worth a hundred performances of the sort in which the "republicanism" of ancient Rome is held up as a model to all amateurs of democracy. To these, even compilations seem preferable. Velly's *Histoire de la France* (1755-59) is neither an original nor a distinguished work. But it is unpedantic and unpretending. On a much higher level stands the *Histoire Ancienne* (1728-36) of Charles Rollin[1] (1661-1741),

Rollin.

[1] *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Guizot, 30 vols., 1827.

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from which many generations have drawn their earliest knowledge of that subject. Rollin disclaims profound learning or wisdom. But his ideals were lofty; he loved whatsoever things are of good report; and he endeavoured to stimulate the young to noble actions by furnishing them with patterns from the ancient world for their imitation. And Rollin was no fool. He was conscious that the narrative of Livy is not all literal truth; and he struck a distinctively modern note when he justified the prominence which he gave to manners and customs, on the ground that they teach us to know the character and genius of a people. We get a further glimpse into the mind of this truly respectable man in his *Traité des Études* (1726-28), a work which, apart from its deserts, is noteworthy as the first important modern treatise on education written in French.

English Historians.

Historical writing was no less generally practised in England than in France, though the task of research was scarcely prosecuted with equal conscientiousness. Lord Hailes's *Annals of Scotland* (1776-79) has proved to possess as little vitality, from a literary point of view, as his colleague Lord Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, or Leland's *History of Ireland* (both 1773). Robert Orme's *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan, &c.* (1763-78) is recognised by experts as trustworthy and accurate, nor has it been superseded by the one-sided performance of James Mill. But it descends to an extreme minuteness of detail, and is chiefly remembered for the part it plays in *The New-*

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comes. Lord Lyttelton's *Life of King Henry II.* (1764-67), though symptomatic of the new interest taken in the Middle Ages, is as dead as the republican Mrs Macaulay's *History of England* (1763-71). Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts on Richard III.* (1768) is one of the earliest instances of the operation known as "whitewashing." As for "the copious Guthrie, the circumstantial Ralph, and the laborious Carte," thus honourably distinguished by Smollett, their names convey little or nothing even to the well-informed of our own day.

Of compilers there was an abundant supply; and of compilation executed by a dexterous and popular hand the rewards were surprisingly handsome. Dr John Campbell (1708-1775), who contributed to the *Universal History*, both ancient and modern, whose works on an infinity of subjects went through many editions, and whose death was accelerated by the comparative failure of his *Political Survey of Great Britain* (1774), is described by Johnson as "the richest author that ever grazed on the common of literature." The above-mentioned William Guthrie (1708-1770), who was responsible in part for *A General History of the World* (1764-67) in twelve volumes, and in whole for *A General History of Scotland* (1767-68) in ten, is another writer of the same class and nationality. Our two most illustrious compilers, apart from the egregious Macpherson, are Goldsmith and Smollett. The *Histories* of Rome (1769), England (1771), and Greece (1774), which the former produced, as well as their respective abridgments, are marked by much of

English compilers.

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his peculiar ease and charm, and long held their own in every English schoolroom. Smollett, less graceful and attractive, was solid and plodding. His account of the period in British history subsequent to the Revolution is useful, though not free from the taint of political partisanship. Perhaps his most instructive passage is the "detail of the forces and fleets of Great Britain" at the end of the last chapter, "from whence the reader will conceive a just idea of her opulence and power."

Voltaire as an historian.

When we pass to a superior order of historians, we find that France can boast no more than one name of the first importance, and that Voltaire's. On certain of his historical writings it is needless for us to dwell. The *Annales de l'Empire* (1753-54) is of much less moment than the works with which it is nearly contemporary; the *Philosophie de l'histoire* (1765) merely exhibits the attitude of the arch-*philosophe* to that branch of study; and the *Histoire du Parlement* (1769) is a political pamphlet. As an historian, Voltaire lives in his *Histoire de Charles XII.* (1732) and its complement, the *Histoire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (1759); in his *Siècle de Louis XIV.* (1751); and in his *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations* (1756).[1]

In his accounts of Charles XII. and Peter the Great, Voltaire is seen at his best as a master of animated narrative. His clearness and propriety of expression never desert him, and he is always lucid

[1] These works have been frequently reprinted, and are easily procurable, particularly the *Charles* and the *Louis*.

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and interesting. With a keen eye for the picturesque, he omits no salient points; and he has no qualms (like some modern historians) about the repetition of a telling anecdote or memorable saying which has passed into tradition. Hence, though neither majestic nor imposing, his picture of a stirring epoch in European history is far from being faint or colourless; and, while its effect is heightened, its correctness is not seriously impaired by his free use of information imparted to him personally by some of those who had taken part in the scenes he portrays. The same is true of his *Louis XIV.*, which, from a purely literary point of view, is his most pleasing historical composition. Conceived on a more elaborate plan than either the *Charles* or the *Peter*, it deals with a theme which aroused the most generous and enthusiastic emotions of which its author was capable. Louis XIV. was his hero; and we seem to catch a note of hero-worship in the book which is absent from the panegyrics composed in honour of that hero's grandson.

His Essai sur les Mœurs.

The thoroughgoing disciple of Voltaire, however, would probably be willing to stake his master's credit as an historian upon the *Essai sur les Mœurs*, a much more ambitious performance than any of those which we have just discussed, and one of which the defects are glaringly apparent. Voltaire, as we have seen, was imbued with the notion that he lived in an age of unprecedented enlightenment; and any sparks of historical imagination which he may ever have possessed were speedily ex-

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tinguished by that fatal prepossession. For him, as for most of his contemporaries, there was no real historical continuity. An impassable gulf yawned between the era of the *Grand Monarque* and the ages that went before. It was not until the accession of Louis XIV. that the star of reason and sound philosophy began to be in the ascendant. Prior to that momentous date, the annals of France—nay, of the universe, with the possible exceptions of ancient Rome and China—are a collection of crime, misery, and madness, with a thin sprinkling of virtues, like dwellings scattered here and there in a savage desert. To know the reign of Louis XI. is, according to Voltaire, to despise it; and the study of all history would be pure waste of time, did it not behove all princes and their subjects to instruct themselves in such matters for practical purposes. It is strange that so much of the human interest of history should thus have escaped a man like Voltaire. It may be foolish to assume that our ancestors possessed, and failed to transmit, the secret of political wisdom. But it argues an equal want of judgment to suppose them wholly imbecile, fanatical, and ignorant.[1]

Voltaire, then, by no means approached the past in the judicial spirit of the scientific historian, to whom nothing should be common or unclean, and for whom *tout savoir* should be *tout pardonner*. This weakness

[1] It is interesting to note Galiani's protest in his *Dialogues* against the habit of talking as if our ancestors had gone about on all-fours, and were "une troupe de tyrans aveugles qui frappaient d'une barre de fer sur un troupeau d'esclaves timides."

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is, of course, particularly noticeable in his handling of the religious element in human nature. All systems of religion are, in his view, fraudulent in their origin and pernicious in their results. But incomparably the most illusory and baneful is Christianity, which in order to vilify the more, a word of faint praise is occasionally flung to rival creeds. Voltaire did not address himself to the subject as to a series of facts to be observed, tested, and accounted for, like other natural phenomena. Rather did he treat it with every symptom of irritation, and with the apparently firm conviction that he could dispose of it once for all by a torrent of bitter and contemptuous language. Sometimes consideration for the susceptibilities of the great may have moderated the impetuosity of his attack. The Greek Church, for example, in the *Russie* seems to come off rather better than its western competitor generally does. But in the heat of his reaction from the working system of Christianity which he saw around him in France, the scientific temper and frame of mind never gained possession of him.

Contrast between Voltaire and Vico.

No better gauge of the essential superficiality of Voltaire's conception of history can be found than that supplied by the writings of the Neapolitan, Giambattista Vico[1] (1668-1744), the definitive edition of whose great work appeared soon after the close of the Frenchman's

[1] *Opere*, 6 vols., Milan: 1835-37; 2nd ed., 1852-54. I must acknowledge special indebtedness to Professor Flint's *Vico* (Philosophical Classics), Edinburgh: 1884.

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sojourn in England. Vico had not a quarter of Voltaire's alertness of mind, but he possessed qualities of a higher order, and in early life he had laid a solid foundation for the work of his maturer years by a diligent study of the jurisprudence of ancient Rome. He was as staunch an admirer of the Baconian as he was an opponent of the Cartesian philosophy; but that he cared little for the popularisation of knowledge we may infer from the great majority of his works having been written in Latin. That language was, no doubt, prescribed for him in the annual orations which he delivered as Professor of Rhetoric in the University of Naples, and of which the most notable is that *De ratione Studiorum* (1708). But he adhered to its use in the *De antiquissimâ Italorum sapientiâ* (1710), and in his treatises on the Philosophy of Jurisprudence, the *De universi juris uno principio* (1720), and the *De constantiâ Jurisprudentis* (1721). His *magnum opus*, however, the *Principi d'una Scienza Nuova* (1725 and 1730), was written in his native tongue. As regards the likelihood of influencing the thought of contemporary Europe, Vico may be said to have written at an unfortunate time. Latin was ceasing, indeed had practically ceased, to be the chief means of communication between the learned class in the various European communities, and the currency of Italian was much less extended than that of English or French. Hence beyond the Alps the philosophy of Vico was little known or heeded.

With posterity, his fame, except in his own country, has been obscured by the celebrity of more recent

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German philosophers. Yet he anticipated many of their views, besides throwing out suggestions which deserved a better fate than oblivion. He "solved" the Homeric problem before Wolf; he was the precursor of Niebuhr in his investigation of early Roman history; and, in a manner, he anticipated Comte in maintaining that human events run in cycles, of which the three stages are, the age of gods, the age of heroes, and the age of men. He did not tie himself down to any of those theories of progress which a single convulsion or catastrophe may shatter into atoms. The cardinal feature of his philosophy of history is his appreciation of practical wisdom — his just conception of the immense part played in human affairs by the unconscious element in reason. He knew that men do not act in deliberate and conscious obedience to a syllogism, and that logic is but an *ex post facto* though indispensable device for analysing human conduct and human thought. And thus he steered the only safe course between those who blindly worshipped the wisdom of their ancestors, and those who, like the French *philosophes*, looked upon their ancestors as fools or knaves.

The defects in Voltaire which we have endeavoured to emphasise by contrast with Vico, detract materially from his greatness as an historian. Yet it must be remembered that his attitude towards the Middle Ages and towards religion was common to most educated men of the time; and that the *Essai*, with all its faults, is, not only a repository of relevant facts which it must have cost much labour to collect, but is

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also an attempt to raise history above the level of the mere chronicler. And thus much may, therefore, in justice be claimed for Voltaire, that he was a pioneer in the right direction, and that the numerous and brilliant school of historians which adorned his country during the first half of the following century might never, but for him, have attained the distinguished eminence it did.

Two out of the three great British historians of our period looked upon religion with no less jealous an eye than Voltaire, and even the third was no friend to any kind of "enthusiasm." They expressed their sentiments, however, with a more specious assumption of coolness, and, though the dullest reader could scarcely fail to catch the true drift of Gibbon's irony,

Hume's History of England.

it is conceivable that David Hume's *History of England*[1] (1754-62) might give no offence on the score of overt irreverence or flippancy. For the modern student it is almost a truism that the anti-religious bias has vitiated some of the most interesting portions of his work. To describe the Parliamentary or Puritan party during the great rebellion as "the sanctified hypocrites who called their oppressions the spoiling of the Egyptians, and their rigid severity the dominion of the elect," is to shock those ardent friends of liberty who welcome any despotism masked by a profession of piety. But such a description also seems crude and inadequate to those less vehement spirits who would fain believe that there are good points in the character of both contending

[1] With continuation by Smollett, 13 vols., 1825.

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factions. No one would repair to Hume for a final analysis of the idiosyncrasy of Oliver Cromwell, though the chapter which deals with that subject is very far indeed from being contemptible. This reputed superficiality — this inability or unwillingness to dig down to the foundations of character — has seriously militated against Hume's fame. Perhaps an even more powerful element in the decline of his reputation has been his animosity to the Whigs. To tamper with the established government, or to try experiments "merely upon the credit of supposed argument and philosophy," can never, he opined, be the part of a wise magistrate. The resentment with which such a view is regarded by its opponents is aggravated by the fact that it proceeds from no high-flying apostle of divine right, but from the most hard-headed and dispassionate thinker of his generation. Perhaps in our anxiety to believe the best of our species, we have been apt to be too contemptuous in the past of Hume's more cynical and less recondite psychology.

But, whatever his prejudices, he cannot fairly be charged with distorting facts to suit them. His treatment may impart a colour to the picture as a whole; but his tints are sober compared with the gorgeous pigments with which so many more recent historians have spread their palettes. It has been said that Hume had absolutely no notion of the difference between truth and falsehood, between history and legend.[1] The only basis for this extravagant

[1] Freeman, *Historical Essays*, 1st series, p. 16.

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assertion is the fact that the account of the pre-Norman period is the most perfunctory and least admirable part of his work. He was satisfied with the recognised authorities, nor did he test their statements as to the remote past with the diligent scrutiny which has since been applied to them; but such authorities as he had he used with straightforwardness and candour. Owing to the peculiar manner in which it was written—for Hume worked backwards from James I. after he had reached the Revolution—the *History* is wanting in that air of steady and dignified progress to some definite goal, which is so remarkable in Gibbon's great achievement. Yet that section of it which was earliest written is, all allowances being made, a fine piece of work; and, though it has been superseded by later text-books as a medium of instruction for the young, the performance as a whole has not been superseded as literature by any other single work covering the same extent of ground.

Hume's historical style.

The style of Hume, like that of William Robertson[1] (1721-1793), however obvious its limitations, is one which can no more be reproduced than the conditions out of which it sprang. Other historians have striven to write in their "mother-English." Hume and Robertson forsook their mother-Scots, and devoted themselves to writing English in much the same spirit, and with much the same results, as we may suppose a great scholar to apply himself to Greek prose. Their composition

[1] *Works*, ed. A. Stewart, 12 vols., Edinburgh: 1818; *Life*, by Dugald Stewart, 1801.

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lacked the nervous idiom of the true-born Englishman. But it is correct, lucid, and laudably free from solecisms; not overladen with ornament, yet not so bare as to be repellent; and, above all, untainted by the vapid rhetoric so dear, as we have seen, to Hutcheson and other Scottish prose-writers. An admirable model, in short, of its kind; none the less serviceable that it cannot be slavishly copied. No one has ever parodied Hume or Robertson, as many have attempted to parody Johnson and Gibbon. At all events, the bold adventurer has never been found out.

Robertson.

In the admirable qualities which we have indicated, the philosopher is superior to the divine, though in mere grammatical accuracy the latter has the better of it. Robertson, too, is more conventional according to the convention of his day; more tolerant of banalities; less scrupulous to shun the superfluous epithet and the trite reflection. Yet he was perhaps even more industrious and painstaking than his friend and neighbour; he plunged deeper into the sources of information; and in some of the passages in which he gives a bird's-eye view of an important movement or train of development, he accomplished something that Hume never seriously essayed. Among such passages are the brief synopsis of Scottish history from the date of the union of the Crowns which concludes the *History of Scotland* (1759), the summary of the causes which conspired to bring about the Reformation, in his *Charles V.* (1769), and especially the *View of the Progress of Society in Europe*, prefixed to the same work. His merits were at one time over-

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rated; and the applause which hailed the publication of the *History of Scotland*, not only in Edinburgh but also in London, actually emboldened the booksellers to offer the author a sum of £4500 for the copyright of his next work. The reaction which such decided success rendered inevitable has been more violent and protracted than is altogether just.

More popular even than the *Scotland* or the *Charles V.* has been the *History of America* (1777), a work which places Robertson's narrative powers in the most favourable light, though its absolute correctness cannot be successfully maintained. The story of the voyage of Columbus is a fine piece of composition; and the accounts of the conquest of Mexico by Cortes, and Peru by Pizarro, as well as the review of the institutions and manners of both these countries, are worthy of their themes, and have been by no means wholly displaced by the work of Prescott. His "elegant and judicious" writings, as one of his editors terms them, do honour to the University of Edinburgh, of which he was Principal, as well as to the Church of Scotland, which he guided for many years. And, apart from purely local considerations, his place in our literature is well assured, if only for the honest and often successful endeavour which himself avows, "to trace causes with accuracy and examine them with coolness."

Gibbon.

But the greatest historian of his own, if not of any, age and country is Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), a man whose private character, as revealed by himself with no little candour and com-

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placency, is slightly ridiculous, and a writer whose literary merit it is scarcely possible to rate too high. He received his education partly at Westminster and Oxford, and partly on the Continent, where he acquired a knowledge of French sufficient to enable him to open his career with an *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature* (1761) in that language. But though he was no doubt powerfully influenced by the school of French writers rising into supremacy during the 'fifties, it was rather the example of Robertson and Hume which impelled him to the most laborious literary task ever undertaken by a man already possessed of a competency. He found time to break a lance with the egregious Warburton over the sixth book of the Æneid in 1770, and nine years later he published a *Vindication* of the earlier volumes of his *magnum opus* from the charges which zealots had brought against them. But, with those exceptions, and with the further exception of the time upon which his military or parliamentary duties had the first call, he consecrated every waking moment of wellnigh a quarter of a century to the composition of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*[1] (1776-1788). He has described in language of incomparable dignity upon what occasion he conceived, and with what mingled feelings he completed, this vast design.

"My temper," he confesses, "is not very susceptible of enthusiasm; and the enthusiasm which I do not

[1] Twelve vols., Edinburgh: 1811; ed. Bury, 7 vols., London: 1896-1900.

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feel I scorn to affect." In these words is summed up practically the whole of what has been seriously urged against Gibbon as an historian; for the averment of a diseased appetite for scandalous anecdote can prove nothing. He was unable to comprehend the psychological phenomenon of religious emotion; but he thoroughly disliked its results; and he chose to give vent to his feelings in a series of elaborate sneers. No greater master of that form of attack ever appeared; and his faculty of choosing some unexpected, but never openly vituperative, epithet or turn of phrase to express whole volumes of scorn is almost unique.[1] The censure which Gibbon distributed among characters repugnant to his temperament was often richly deserved. But the method, though a good servant, is notoriously apt to be a bad master. He became more reckless as he grew older; and it is impossible not to feel that some of the footnotes in the later volumes are scarcely worthy of so grave and illustrious an author.

His attitude to enthusiasm.

However keenly we may relish Gibbon's exquisite irony at its best, we must own (what has been already admitted in the case of Voltaire) that its incessant exercise is scarcely in keeping with the judicial habit

[1] "While they expected the descent of the *tardy* angel, the doors were broken with axes" (of the Christians collected in the Church of St Sophia in Constantinople); "from Jerusalem the pilgrim returned an *accomplished* fanatic" (of Peter the Hermit); "in these times of anarchy and vice a *modest* sinner might easily incur a debt of 300 years" (of the doctrine of purgatory): these are a few illustrations of a habit of which the stock instance is a notorious passage about the fate of Pope John XXIII.

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of mind of the ideal historian. But the bias is so manifest that no one can be cajoled or trepanned into his way of thinking without ample warning; and, like Hume, he does not stoop to accommodate his facts to his theories. He puts his own construction upon them, and proceeds to draw what may seem to some the most unwarrantable inferences; but the facts presented for the reader himself to deal with are unimpeachable. Nowhere are his prepossessions more ostentatiously displayed than in the famous fifteenth chapter upon the secondary causes of the rapid progress of Christianity; and yet its essential accuracy has never been successfully impugned in any material particular. Similarly his account of the various heresies which distracted the Christian Church is substantially correct, though his *animus* is as obvious as his learning. In the course of more than a century many new sources of information have been brought to light, and more rigorous tests have been applied to authorities, both old and new, than were usual in Gibbon's generation. Yet, tried by the standard of modern research, he emerges all but unscathed from the ordeal,—so unerring was his instinct for truth, so well founded his boast that he had "always endeavoured to draw from the fountain-head." He is the one historian of his time who continues to have a high positive as well as relative value, and who is still recommended to the student for his matter as well as for the form in which he cast it.

Gibbon's style, so far from pretending to be natural, is a monument of studied affectation, a triumph of

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conscious art. The plainest statements are put in a circuitous way; and even individuals, deprived of their proper appellation, must be content to be distinguished as the respectable nephew of X. or the degenerate grandson of Y. When we compare Gibbon with Johnson, we are struck by the defects of his qualities. He has none of the *race*, none of the unquenchable virility, none of the trenchant idiom, of the bigoted lexicographer. His mannerism, after a time, becomes cloying; and his favourite "three-decker" sentence, at first so striking and sonorous, ends by being oppressive in its monotony. Even worse things than these have been alleged against Gibbon. Certain modern critics will have him a loose and slovenly writer. The penny-a-liner at his worst and most flamboyant, say they, is his legitimate heir. To this it may suffice to reply that Gibbon can no more be held responsible for the awkwardness and ineptitude of his imitators than Johnson.

His style.

When we think of Gibbon's work, our minds are apt to turn to many of its most celebrated passages. But its glory does not really lie in these: in the synopsis of the Roman law, or the story of the rise of the Mohammedan religion, or the narrative of the Crusades, or the description of the fall of Constantinople, in which last the author boldly invites comparison with Thucydides. Masterly and impressive as such chapters, and many others, seem, detached from one another, they gain immensely when looked at as constituents of one stupendous whole. Gibbon's work must not be criticised piece-

Greatness of The Decline and Fall.

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meal; nor must the eye be permitted to dwell upon points of detail. It is only when we contemplate the vastness of its conception, the true harmony of its proportions, the nice adjustment of its component parts, and the marvellously correct perspective of the result, that we can do justice to such a book. Gibbon was fortunate enough to live in an age in which the view of the wood had not yet been obscured by the multiplicity of the trees. The affectation of our own time is to make history "scientific," and the simplest and most obvious prescription for making it scientific is to make it dull. In the pursuit of this foible much valuable information may be communicated in a crude and undigested form. But if Clio is to recover her traditional place among the nine, it will only be when men have reverted to the pattern followed by the historian of the decline and fall of Rome.

Rise of Political Economy.

It is not surprising that the thirty years which followed the publication of the *Esprit des Lois* should have been peculiarly rich in works dealing with political philosophy from the economic point of view. It was, indeed, during the currency of these three decades that political economy took definite form, and became a distinct and specific branch of science and literature. That the *Political Discourses* of Hume stimulated the specialising movement in France is beyond question. Apart from his influence, however, there was enough in the condition of that country to direct the minds of thoughtful men to a careful and minute study of the sources and

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distribution of wealth. The peasantry lived in a state of chronic misery and destitution. The exportation of commodities, and more particularly of corn, was prohibited, and their free internal circulation checked by a vexatious code of regulations and a corresponding scale of duties, which had descended from the days when France had been rather a congeries of semi-independent provinces than a united nation. The method of levying the taxes imposed the maximum of hardship with the minimum of result. The "feudal system," finally, as is demonstrated by the work of Boncerf on *Les Inconvénients des droits féodaux* (1776), had failed to adapt itself, as it had in England and Scotland, to the change from a military to an industrial state of society, and the successful pursuit of agriculture was obstructed by a hundred irritating impediments. In addition to all these palpable facts, it must be remembered that a belief in self-interest as the sole spring of human action was becoming fashionable. This opinion, which was strongly held by the *philosophes*, and inspired the work of Helvétius, was by no means confined to France. Josiah Tucker expounded it with crudeness and brutality in his *Elements of Commerce* (1755), and Beccaria with more art and persuasiveness in his famous treatise *Dei delitti e delle pene* (1764), which the Abbé Morellet translated into French. When we consider that the doctrine of the omnipotence of self-interest is necessarily the fundamental postulate of any system of purely economic speculation, we need feel no astonishment that the new field of inquiry should have attracted the services of many able and willing hands.

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A strongly marked identity of thought and feeling characterises the school of writers known to a later generation as "Physiocrates," and to their own merely as "Economistes."[1] Certain authors, it is true, who may properly be classified with them, held theories which the main body would have repudiated. Thus Morelly's *Le Code de la Nature* (1758-60), the very name of which is practically a French rendering of *Physiocratie*, contains an attack on private property, which the hierophant of the Physiocrats, much about the same time, was pronouncing to be "le plus fort lien d'une société." So too, Mercier de la Rivière, who found his ideal, in this respect as in others, adequately realised in the Chinese Empire (on which Quesnay also wrote in the same year), was moved in *L'Ordre naturel et essentiel des Sociétés Politiques* (1767) to sound the praises of a paternal despotism more loudly than many others might have been disposed to do. Yet, except in degree, he did not by so doing fall away from Economist orthodoxy, of which respect for the powers that be was one of the notes. A party, of whose most eminent members one administered a province for many years with great *éclat*, and the other was physician to the king's mistress, had little interest to make a sweeping attack upon constituted authority.

The Physiocrats.

From the point of view of the Economists, indeed, no violent revolution or upheaval of the existing government was necessary. They denounced the luxury

[1] See the articles on the various members of the school under their respective names in the *Dictionary of Political Economy*, ed. Palgrave, 3 vols., 1894-99.

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of the age, and deplored the violent contrast which existed between the state of the rich and of the poor; but they burned with no wish to *écraser* any institution; they were possessed by no ambition to assert the equality of mankind; and they itched with no desire to deprive the rich of their ill-earned gains. If the evils were great, the remedies seemed to them both simple and obvious. They believed that matters would adjust themselves automatically if the fetters by which trade and commerce were bound could only be struck off.[1] Relax all restrictions, they thought; give men free scope for the exercise of their industry and the development of their powers; and we shall all live happily ever after. It is to the Physiocrats that we owe the famous maxim, "Laissez faire, laissez passer." This was the lesson which they endeavoured to inculcate upon the kings and rulers of the world through the medium of innumerable articles in the *Journal de l'Agriculture, du Commerce, et des Finances* (1764-83), and the *Ephémérides du Citoyen* (1765-1772), the recognised organs of the sect. This is the practical outcome of Quesnay's articles on "Fermiers" and "Grains" in the *Encyclopædia*, and of his various tracts collected in 1767 under the title of *Physiocratie;* of his editor, Du Pont's *Exportation et Importation des Grains* (1764); of Morellet's *Réflexions sur les avantages de la libre fabrication* (1758); and of Turgot's articles

[1] Turgot condemns "le malheureux principe qui a si longtemps infecté l'administration du commerce, je veux dire la manie de tout conduire, de tout régler, et de ne jamais s'en rapporter aux hommes sur leur propre intérêt."—Art. "*Foires et Marchés*" in the *Encyclopédie.*

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on "Foires" and "Fondations," and his *Lettres à M. le Contrôleur-Général sur la liberté du commerce des Grains* (1770).

In support of the cure there proposed for the depressed condition of agriculture, the Economists were able to appeal to the authority of a man thoroughly conversant with the actual business of commerce. Jean Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay (1712-1759) was a tower of strength to the cause of Free Trade, and exerted an influence over its advocates out of all proportion to the extent or importance of his contributions to the literature of the subject. But in an age of progress and enlightenment it is imperative to invent, or discover, theoretical reasons for the practical conclusions at which men have instinctively arrived. Accordingly, the Physiocrats proceeded to build up their system upon premises of which many, if not most, have been unanimously rejected by the political economists of a later date. Their fundamental proposition was that only the capital and labour applied to agriculture add to the wealth or revenue of a country. Hence the celebrated distinction between the "classe productrice," embracing the whole landed interest in the widest sense, and the "classe stérile," embracing everybody else. Manufactures may reproduce the exact value of what is expended on them in the way of capital and labour; but they can do no more. Agriculture, on the other hand, differs from all other industries in respect that it not only brings the farmer a trading profit besides recouping him for the amount he has spent on his own and

Doctrines of the Physiocrats.

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his labourers' subsistence, but also provides a fund over and above, which goes to the landowner under the name of rent, and which represents an absolute addition to the existing stock of national wealth. Upon this "produit net"—one of the great catchwords of the system—falls the burden of every kind of taxation. Therefore, to avoid friction and waste, the whole of the public expenditure should be met out of a single tax levied on land. "L'impôt unique" thus became another of the great catchwords. Out of this "produit net," again, the manufacturer, the artisan, and the shopkeeper are paid for what they produce or sell. It follows that, the greater the produce of the land, the larger will be the "produit net," and consequently the more will the capitalist, the merchant, and the mechanic prosper; and, the more they prosper, the greater will be the demand for agricultural produce, the higher will be its price, and the larger will be the "produit net." National prosperity is thus secured for ever upon a stable basis; the circle of reasoning is complete; and population and the productiveness of the soil are seen to advance *pari saltu*, and apparently *ad infinitum*.

Such is the orthodox creed of the Physiocrats, of whom the two most typical specimens were François Quesnay[1] (1694-1774) and Anne Robert Jacques Turgot[2] (1727-81). Quesnay's medical writings scarcely fall within the province of

Quesnay.

[1] *Physiocratie*, Leyden: 1768; *Œuvres*, ed. Oncken, Paris: 1888.

[2] *Œuvres*, 9 vols., ed. Dupont, Paris: 1808-11; Léon Say, *Turgot*, 1887; Neymarck, *Turgot et ses doctrines*, 1885.

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literature; and it is perhaps only by courtesy that his economical writings can be said to do so. His *Tableau Économique* (1758) does not; and of the *Droit Naturel*, the *Observations Importantes*, the *Maximes Générales*, and his other tractates, the best that can be said is that they are clear and dispassionate. The same measure of faint praise must suffice for Turgot. His two *Discours* (1750) are superficial, as all such performances must needs be. But the one is noteworthy, as indicating how far removed he stood from the position of the *philosophes* with regard to the Christian religion, and the other, which is concerned with the progress of the human mind, is chiefly remembered for its lucky prediction of the early separation from Great Britain of her American colonies. If he had carried out his ambitious project of a Universal History, he would doubtless have bequeathed to us many maxims of equal prudence, sagacity, and good feeling with those manifested in the *Lettres sur la Tolérance* (1753-54). But in all his work there is practically no grace of form or charm of manner. His *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses* (1766) is merely a convenient summary of Physiocrat doctrine. Hard, formal, and precise, his style bears a strong resemblance to Mr John Mill's, though it has none of the outbursts which diversify the writing of the latter. It was in the field of action that Turgot was destined to win distinction. In governing a poverty-stricken province he displayed the highest qualities of an administrator; and with his expulsion from the office

Turgot.

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of Controller-General in 1776, the last hope of averting national bankruptcy disappeared.

The elder Mirabeau.

By far the most picturesque figure, however, among the Economists is that of Victor de Riquetti, Marquis de Mirabeau (1715-89), the illustrious father of an illustrious son. He wrote a book called *L'Ami des Hommes*, and quarrelled desperately with his wife and family, whom he never hesitated, if need were, to keep under lock and key. He was an enthusiastic advocate of high farming, as a means to prosperity, and squandered a fortune on unsuccessful agricultural experiments. Thus it is that destiny sometimes deals with the would-be benefactors of mankind.

The views of Mirabeau are curiously analogous in some respects to those both of Cobbett and of the Young England party in the succeeding century. He had the traditional contempt of the noble for commerce, and much of his envy of those who have acquired great wealth in mercantile pursuits. The classes engaged in the cultivation of the soil were the prime object of his solicitude; and he valued the prosperity of the trading and manufacturing sections of society only as a means to that of the agriculturist. He looked back with fond regret to a golden age in which the calling of the labourer had been respected, not despised, and in which the local life of rural communities had not been crushed out by the vicinity of large and busy towns. "Aimez, honorez, l'agriculture," is the cry of this aristocratic enthusiast; "c'est le foyer, ce sont les entrailles et la racine, d'un état." This is the ultimate message

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of all his works; of his papers on practical agriculture; of the *Mémoire sur l'utilité des États provinciaux* (1750); of the *Théorie de l'Impôt* (1760), which procured his temporary rustication from Paris; and, above all, of the famous *Ami des Hommes, ou traité de la population* (1756),[1] which brought its author into active alliance with Quesnay.

Mirabeau affects a modesty about the merits of his work which, we may be tolerably sure, he did not feel. Conscious that his strength lay in theory rather than in practice, he begs that defects of detail in the working out of his schemes may not be held to prejudice the validity of his general principles. He hates taking trouble, he tells us; he wrote *L'Ami des Hommes* in six months; and he owns, what is true enough, that it is "un chaos d'idées et de détails." His style he characterises, with something less than strict fairness, as "toujours louche et défectueux," and again as "inégal, sans goût, négligé, souvent diffus, et amphibologique." But he writes like a human being and not like a machine, and the liquid in his veins is not ink but blood. To turn to Mirabeau from the other Economists is to bid adieu to "ces airs de certitude puerile," and "la petite profession d'esprit fort," which he remarks in the *philosophes*, and which are equally characteristic of their rivals. He feels strongly; he sees clearly what he does see; and he has no hesitation in expressing himself in the most vivid and homely phraseology. He is not too scientific to talk

[1] Six vols., La Haye: 1758-62. This edition contains all Mirabeau's important writings except the *Théorie*.

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about men multiplying "like rats in a farmyard"; and nothing more vigorous, and at the same time more cogent, than his argument in favour of local tribunals ever proceeded from the pen of Cobbett.[1] Indeed the whole chapter on "Justice et Police" may be coupled with that on "Les Mœurs" as affording a typical illustration of the mental attitude of this singular man. But the choicest morsels in the book are the bursts of rhetoric, especially when threats are not obscurely mingled with the accents of exhortation and reproof. The most famous of these—the apostrophe to the King with which the work concludes—is undoubtedly a masterpiece in its kind. Scarce less excellent and effective is the address to the great ones of the earth,[2] with its "Tremblez, hommes de marbre, hommes durs et polis, tremblez!" There can be no mystery as to the source whence the younger Mirabeau derived his gift of popular eloquence.

No love was lost between the Economists and the *Philosophes*, to whom the predilection of the former for virtuous and frugal living, coupled with their notorious disposition to avoid all collision with the authorities, was no recommendation. The elder Mirabeau denounced the Encyclopædic sect in round terms, and Turgot was perhaps the one man who enjoyed the unqualified regard and confidence of both parties. Voltaire ridiculed the distinctive tenets of the

[1] See especially the passage beginning: "Pierre au village est un patriarche connu; Laurent est un fripon avéré."—Ed. cit., ii. 66.

[2] Vol. iv. p. 85.

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Physiocrats in *L'homme aux quarante Écus*, and others were not wanting to defend the existing economic system against innovation. The only worthy opponent, however, of Quesnay's gospel was Ferdinando Galiani (1728-87), an Italian by birth, and, it may almost be said, a Frenchman by choice. He commenced author at seventeen with a memoir upon Platonic affection, and another on the state of the currency at the time of the Trojan war. A few years later he published a treatise *Della Moneta*, which indicated an advance in wisdom and knowledge as well as age. Arriving in Paris in 1759, he had the *entrée* of the *salons*, where he soon became a welcome guest, and contracted a particular friendship with Mme. d'Épinay. Ten years later, to his bitter regret, he was recalled to Naples. During that blissful decade he had produced his chief work, the *Dialoghi sul commerce dei grani* (1764), which Diderot (it is said) translated into French in 1770. Galiani is at one with the Economists in their views as to internal free trade in France, though he differs from them as to the free exportation of corn. But the real importance of his Dialogues lies in the spirit in which he attacks economical problems. Where the Economists are stiff and pedantic, he is natural and lively. Where they are doctrinaires, he is the finished man of the world. Political economy was for him no collection of abstract propositions to be applied with indiscriminate and inflexible uniformity to every age and country. He is an opportunist, in the best

Galiani.

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sense of the word, deeply impressed with the variety of circumstances which presents itself to our gaze in the habitable world, and firm in the belief that the special nature of those circumstances should in each case determine the character of their treatment. We are not concerned with the soundness of his opinions as to the requirements of contemporary France. But we must be grateful for so much breadth of mind, for the unmistakable touch of human nature, for the acuteness with which he detects, and the gaiety with which he exposes, a fallacy, and for the good humour and vivacity which light up every sentence of the work.

Adam Smith.

The economic speculation of the period culminated in Adam Smith's *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*[1] (1776), in which all that is most valuable in the labours of his predecessors appears to be concentrated. Though he rejects the peculiar doctrines of the "agricultural system," as he terms it, Smith pays a high tribute to the learning and ingenuity of the Physiocrats. He concurs in many of their practical conclusions, and he shares with them the principle, which is at the root of all sound economic theory, that wealth is not a synonym for money. But this truth had been grasped and enunciated before Quesnay published his *Tableau* by David Hume (who, indeed, is not free from all

[1] Ed. Rogers, 2 vols., Oxford: 1869; ed. M'Culloch, 4 vols., Edinburgh: 1828; Rae, *Life*, 1895. The Smith literature is too extensive for enumeration here.

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suspicion of the heresy that the precious metals are mere tokens of exchange, with no intrinsic value); and Smith's debt is immeasurably greater to Hume than to any other individual or to any school of thought.

His debt to Hume.

In Hume's *Essays*,[1] political economy, as defined on Smith's title-page and understood ever since, is closely interwoven with political philosophy. If, however, we endeavour to extricate his purely economic teaching, we shall find that there is scarcely a point associated with the name of Smith in which Hume has not anticipated him. That everything in the world is purchased by labour, and that our appetites are the only spurs to labour, are propositions to which the later writer would have yielded a willing assent. That the doctrine of the "balance of trade," as then held, was a delusion, is an article which he would have subscribed with equal alacrity. If there was one idea more firmly imbedded in the minds of the business men of the age than another, it was that the wealth of one country can only be built up on the poverty of another. This notion Hume utterly repudiated.[2] In short, in his crusade against the "Mercantile System,"

[1] On Hume as an Economist, consult Bonar, *Philosophy and Political Economy*, 1893.

[2] "I shall venture to acknowledge," he declares in his essay on "The Jealousy of Trade," "that, not only as a man, but as a British subject, I pray for the flourishing commerce of Germany, Spain, Italy, and even France itself." What is a considerable part of *The Wealth of Nations* but a demonstration that this prayer is eminently reasonable and pious?

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Smith does but follow in Hume's footsteps, though he betrays more asperity than his pioneer towards a fiscal code with which the greatness of England (as opposed to Scotland) was supposed to be indissolubly bound up, and of which the great prop and mainstay was that hero of the drama, the English merchant. Had Hume only pursued his economical inquiries systematically, instead of applying to the less arduous task of writing the history of England, he might have enriched our literature with a work superior to his friend's in point of style, and possibly, for his mind was at least as open, and his intellect even more acute, in point also of matter.

Merits of The Wealth of Nations.

But only by a genius such as Hume's could the merits of *The Wealth of Nations* have been thrown into the shade. We may test the book by comparison either with prior and contemporary work in the same department, or with work subsequent in date; and in either case the result is a triumph for Adam Smith. He surpasses all previous writers in the thoroughness with which he exhausts a subject, of which the full elucidation of a single part might well have seemed too great a task. The multiplicity of his facts and figures is astonishing when we recollect that in his age the facilities for their ascertainment were much less than in our own, and that the various organisations for their collection and diffusion were in a comparatively rudimentary condition. No detail is too minute to escape his attention; and the smallest step in every manufacturing process is worth the

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trouble of being carefully recorded in his note-book. From the making of a pin or the management of a dairy to the conduct of a banking-house or the financing of a nation, there is no species of industry or business with the practical working of which he does not seem to have a competent acquaintance. Yet everything in his treatise is systematic and orderly; there is no trace of chaos or confusion; the units composing this vast mass of information fall each into its proper place, and contribute each its due quota to the appropriate argument.

The pre-eminence of Smith over his successors is equally conspicuous, though we now and then detect in his writings the germs of some of their most typical failings. He seems more conscious than most of them of the infinite variety of the economic conditions which prevail on the face of the globe, and less eager than many to formulate a rigid "law" for universal application. He may tell us, indeed, that political economy prescribes this or prescribes that; but in so saying he has clearly economic ends in view; and he recognises the existence of a class of considerations with which political economy as such has nothing to do, and which may entirely overrule its express dictates, if the term dictate may be allowed. For Adam Smith, a "law," or, as he preferred to call it, a principle, of political economy was the statement of such a proposition, as that, given the economic conditions A, B, C . . . the economic results X, Y, Z . . . must surely follow. For some of his disciples it has signified something akin to what we call the "law of gravita-

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tion," which it is impossible, and therefore wicked, to violate or evade. On the other hand, while he recognises that high policy must be paramount (and therefore defends the Navigation Laws), he takes care not to vitiate the results of his speculation by the infusion of any extraneous or irrelevant element into the discussion. "Christian" economics would have seemed to him as meaningless and barren a phrase as Mohammedan hydrostatics. The subject of which he treated was, in his view, emphatically a science, and could be expounded to any practical purpose only if the instinct of cupidity were "abstracted," and the method of inquiry adopted which Mr Mill describes in one of the most instructive chapters of his *Logic*. Hence sentiment and moralising were out of place, and the language of strong emotion was to be avoided. The book may be less ebullient in consequence, but upon the whole the style is eminently well suited to the matter in hand, being clear, perspicuous, and unaffected, though by no means bald or crabbed.

It is possible to point out defects in *The Wealth of Nations*, as in all the valuable productions of the human intellect. We may say, for instance, with perfect truth, that the economics of consumption are relegated to a wholly subordinate position, if not entirely neglected; and that the consumer is treated merely as a consumer, and not as a producer as well, which he must needs be in order to be effective in the other capacity. These flaws, however, are comparatively insignificant; and subsequent economists have done little to cure them.

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Its influence.

It will always remain Smith's great distinction that he completed the "staking out" of political economy as a separate science. No economist, whatever the complexion of his views, can help tracing his intellectual pedigree back to him. It is also to his glory that, about seventy years after the appearance of his great work, the British merchant and the British manufacturer became converted to his views. His influence has thus been very considerable. But it is well to remember that, with the exception of Great Britain and Ireland, the whole world has hitherto turned a deaf ear to his charming. Nine-tenths of the civilised and uncivilised globe are agreed upon a fiscal system which rests, either on the theory that wealth is money and money wealth, or on the view that the advantages, real or imaginary, to be derived from a close observance of economic "law" are trifling compared with those which result from an opposite course of conduct. The nations which have had the temerity to reject in practice the speculative conclusions of *The Wealth of Nations*, show little as yet to indicate the approach of economic ruin; but when the day of disaster arrives, if it ever does, they will be liable to be reproached with having spurned the counsel of no more clear-headed, well-informed, and sagacious adviser than Adam Smith.

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CHAPTER VIII.

MEMOIRS AND CORRESPONDENCE: JOURNALISM AND CRITICISM.

FRENCH MEMOIRS — SAINT-SIMON — MARMONTEL — MME. DE STAAL-DELAUNAY — OTHER MEMOIR-WRITERS — ENGLISH MEMOIRS—GIBBON'S 'AUTOBIOGRAPHY'—LETTER-WRITERS—GRAY—HORACE WALPOLE—CHESTERFIELD—MME. DU DEFFAND—VOLTAIRE—JOURNALISM IN ENGLAND — POLITICAL JOURNALISM — "JUNIUS" — JOHNSON'S PAMPHLETS—FRÉRON—JOURNALISM IN FRANCE—MARMONTEL AND THE 'MERCURE'—THE 'SPECTATOR' CONVENTION—MAGAZINES—THE 'MONTHLY' AND THE 'CRITICAL' — CRITICISM — MARMONTEL'S 'ÉLÉMENTS' — LA HARPE'S 'COURS DE LITTÉRATURE' — BURKE'S 'ENQUIRY' — REYNOLDS'S 'DISCOURSES' — THE TWO WARTONS — JOHNSON'S 'LIVES OF THE POETS.'

French Memoirs.

THAT the French literature of the eighteenth century is peculiarly rich in memoirs and correspondence[1] is beyond dispute. There is scarcely a decade within the limits of our period upon the

[1] See *Bibliothèque des Mémoires*, ed. Barrière, 28 vols. v.d. The Collection of M. Petitot unfortunately does not extend very far into the century. Separate editions are referred to in notes to the text; and the same course is pursued with regard to the correspondence. For a bird's-eye view of the latter, Messrs Hachette & Cie's *Choix de Lettres du XVIII^me^ Siècle*, ed. G. Lanson, 1897, may be recommended as an example of judicious selection and editing.

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history of which a flood of light has not been thrown by people who desired to record the events which were taking place around them, or to delineate the characters of those with whom they were brought into contact. Such authors were drawn from almost every class of the community. They ranged from royal dukes at the one extremity to the waiting-women of king's mistresses at the other. Every point of view is represented; and out of this ample and varied material we are enabled to frame a singularly detailed conception of the political and social life of the age. Most of the collections of reminiscences and letters did not appear in print until long after the original date of their composition. The date of the first complete *Saint-Simon*, for example, if the epithet complete be permissible, is 1856. The memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson remained unpublished till sixty-eight years had elapsed after his death. Those of Buvat, who died in 1729, were only given to the public in 1865. Yet no apology seems necessary for regarding any author as within our scope whose active life, or whose observation of the active life of others, must be referred to the years which intervene between the death of Louis XIV. and the death of Voltaire.

Louis de Rouvray, Duc de Saint-Simon[1] (1675-1755), is admitted to be *facile princeps* among memoir-writers, though for some inscrutable reason he has excited the

[1] *Mémoires*, ed. Chéruel and Regnier, 21 vols., 1873-81; ed. M. de Boislisle, vols. i.-xv. in the *Grands Écrivains* series. See also E. Cannan, *The Duke of Saint-Simon*, Oxford: 1885; Mr Clifton Collins's admirable monograph in the Foreign Classics series; and Sainte-Beuve's Essays in the *Causeries*, vols. iii. and xv.

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animosity of some of his editors and commentators. It is easy to sneer at his narrow outlook upon life, and to cast ridicule upon his antiquated political ideals. But, after all, the atmosphere of the Court was no more demoralising than that breathed by the *philosophes;* his jealousy for the privileges of his order was at least as respectable as their nervous anxiety to secure a *fauteuil* at the Academy;[1] and his conception of a France regenerated through her old nobility, while neither sordid nor ignoble, is inferior in point of practicability to the schemes of none of the constitution-mongers who swarmed in the generations succeeding his death. His style has been accused of solecisms; and he must certainly plead guilty, not merely to errors in grammar or spelling, but also, to more than an occasional lapse from the true classical idiom. Yet, considered as a means to an end, his style is an unqualified success; and the personages whom he depicts are preserved for us in imperishable colours.

Saint-Simon.

Saint-Simon makes no pretence of being impartial. He held strong opinions, and he was a good hater. He despised the "magnanimity" which coolly flings away the fruits of a hard-earned victory. But he recognised that truth should be the paramount consideration of the chronicler, and he would have re-

[1] "L'Académie est souvent négligée par ses propres membres. Cependant à peine un des quarante a-t-il rendu les derniers soupirs, que dix concurrens se présentent; un évêché n'est pas plus brigué; on court en poste à Versailles; on fait parler toutes les femmes; on fait agir tous les intrigans; on fait mouvoir tous les ressorts; des haines violentes sont souvent le fruit de ces démarches."—Voltaire to Lefèvre (1732).

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pudiated the charge that the hues in which his enemies appear are not true to nature. Nor are his prepossessions and dislikes suffered to interfere with the artistic effect of the picture. The analogy of drawing is constantly in his mouth. There is nothing he admires more in other judges of character than a really fine "coup de pinceau," and his own work abounds with masterstrokes. No trait of appearance or deportment was too trivial to elude his vigilance, no train of events too complicated to baffle his sagacious and eager curiosity. He drew his information from every conceivable source, and thus he makes us know the men and women of his time as few people have the power of knowing their own contemporaries. The task of commenting upon the journal of Dangeau was what probably determined him to reduce his own papers to order, and to compose the *Mémoires*, which seem to have been written between 1739 and 1752. No contrast could be greater than that between the meagre skeleton of Dangeau and the living body with which Saint-Simon clothed it. Other writers who have covered much the same ground, or have dealt with much the same class of subject, may be praised as careful and industrious. The *Mémoires secrets sur les règnes de Louis XIV. et de Louis XV.* of Charles Pineau Duclos (*ante*, p. 65) are neither uninstructive nor uninteresting. The Baron de Besenval (1722-1791), again, is a valuable authority on the closing years of the reign of Louis XV., and on the period immediately anterior to the Revolution. But they both lack the mastery of light and shade, the profound

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insight into human nature, and the gift of summing up a character in a couple of sentences, which make Saint-Simon what he is, and for once render the inevitable comparison with Tacitus neither far-fetched nor inept.

Saint-Simon, then, has no second in his art; and when we descend to a lower rank of memoir-writers, the gap between the best and the worst of them is less wide than that which separates the best of them from him. But in that humbler class the supremacy seems justly attributable to Marmontel,[1] who wrote in order to impart to his children the lessons of his own experience. His career had not, he frankly owns, been a model of virtue or discretion. Part of his charm lies in his fervent exhortations to his family to take warning by their father's bad example;[2] and this characteristic is not the only Boswellian quality that distinguished him. In intellect, as in temperament, the disciple of Voltaire is curiously similar to the disciple of Johnson. He has the same mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, the same knack of presenting character with vividness, the same trick of reproducing conversation with spirit. His is by far the most graphic, and at the same time coherent, account which we possess of the literary and journalistic world of Paris, with all its feuds and jealousies,

Marmontel.

[1] *Œuvres Postumes*, 6 vols., Paris: 1805. The *Mémoires d'un père, &c.*, occupy vols. iii. to vi.

[2] "O mes enfants!" he exclaims in a burst of contrition, "quelles âmes que celles qui ne sont inquiètes que des mouvements de l'écliptique, ou que des mœurs et des arts des Chinois!" To that select band of unemotional philosophers our *philosophe* most certainly did not belong.

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in the latter half of the reign of Louis XV. He is the chronicler of all who frequented the *salons* or hovered on their thresholds. When he sets himself to describe a personality, such as Mme. Geoffrin, or Mlle. de L'Espinasse, or Panard, or Galiani, or Gentil-Bernard, his touch is amazingly felicitous. But he is at his very best when he can bring his master, Voltaire, into the picture. Voltaire in the author's box on the first night of *Aristomène*, and Voltaire in his home at Ferney during the last years of his life, are only surpassed by Johnson at Mr Dilly's table in company with John Wilkes, and two or three other specimens of Boswell's inspiration at its highest.

Scarcely any faction in politics or society in the early part of our period is better known to us than that of which the Duchesse du Maine was the illustrious head. Jean Buvat has told us much of the plottings and intrigues which were a-foot at Sceaux; but his narrative is not comparable in point of interest to that of the Baroness de Staal-Delaunay (1693-1750), a dependant of the Duchess, who had received an unusually thorough education. Blessed with the instinctive knowledge of character common to her sex, and with perhaps more than its average allowance of humour, she has described the social and intellectual side of life at the celebrated *château* with much animation, candour, and fidelity. Her lot was far from being enviable. But, though melancholy, she is never morbid; nor was her shrewd mother wit smothered by the weight of her erudition. She is not unduly emphatic; and she leaves the

Mme. de Staal-Delaunay.

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absurdities she notes to be enjoyed by the reader without, metaphorically, italicising them. Nothing in her memoirs is more delightful than the subdued strain of mordant irony which runs through what she has to say of herself and her own affairs.

Other memoir-writers.

Charles Jean François Hénault (1685-1770) was another member of the Sceaux circle, which he long outlived. In later life he was an attached and intimate friend of Mme. du Deffand, and a partisan of the unfortunate consort of Louis XV. Hénault combined the successful professional man with the polished man of the world. If he was the Valentine of French memoir-writers, the Orson was no less certainly René Louis Voyer, Marquis d'Argenson[1] (1694-1757)—brother of the Count of the same name to whom the *Encyclopédie* was dedicated—a man of noble birth and brutal manners, to whom Sainte-Beuve has happily applied the description of "bourru philosophique." His abilities are beyond question, and there is much in his memoirs that could ill be spared, such as the account of the "club de l'entresol," and his observations upon the change in manners which had taken place since his younger days. Also, his thumb-nail portraits of the Abbé de Pomponne, of the Duc de Vendôme and his brother the Grand Prieur, of the Comte de Belle-Isle, of Cardinal Fleury, and of others, are drawn with distinctness and precision, though without genius. How much the infamous Duc de Richelieu (1696-1788) really contributed to the memoirs which bear his name, it is impossible to

[1] *Mémoires*, Paris: 1825.

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determine. They were written by the Abbé Soulavie, an ecclesiastic of no very high character; and the author made free use of Saint-Simon, an imperfect edition of whose memoirs he gave to the world in 1788. They contain much which may well have been derived from the ostensible source, and scandalous as they are, they seem a monument of decorum compared with the so-called *Vie Privée* of Richelieu (1791), which has all the notes, though more than the ability, of the ordinary pornographic romance. With the memoirs of Mme. du Hausset, we again return to the region of authoritative documents. Madame was the waiting-maid of Mme. de Pompadour, and by dint of judicious eavesdropping collected a good deal of information not designed to reach her ear. She has plenty of vivacity, and one of her merits is that she does not pretend to be above her station, and is not ashamed to avow her ignorance.[1] While she exhibits her mistress to us in the intimacy of private life, the Abbé de Bernis performs the same task for Mme. de Pompadour in her public and political capacity. Dieudonné Thiébault (1733-1807), in his *Vingt ans de séjour à Berlin*, gives us no less vivid and instructive a picture of the Court of Frederick the Great. Other memoir-writers might be named whose works may be sought in the collection of Barrière; but our enumeration must conclude with not the least amusing of them all.

[1] *E.g.*, "On me dit depuis que M. Quesnay était fort instruit de certaines choses qui ont rapport aux finances, et qu'il était un grande *économiste;* mais je ne sais pas trop ce que c'est. Ce qu'il y a de certain c'est qu'il avait beaucoup d'esprit; il était fort gai et fort plaisant et très-habile médecin."—*Mémoires*, ed. Barrière, iii. 59.

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From 1762 to 1782 a real, or imaginary, person named Bachaumont kept a journal in which he entered all the current gossip and scandal, all the latest stories, and all the newest epigrams and fugitive verses. By means of this curious miscellany he has transmitted much to posterity which otherwise would have been forgotten, together with much which had better perhaps have been permitted to sink into oblivion. As a record of "Paris day by day" these memoirs are invaluable, and in particular it may be noted that they are the chief authority for the events which occurred between Voltaire's triumphant re-entry into Paris and his death, between three and four months afterwards.[1]

English memoirs.

The English memoirs of the period are decidedly inferior to the French. Some works, indeed, there are which supply useful information. The *Apology* of Colley Cibber (1671-1757) is a well-stored repository of particulars concerning the English stage from the Restoration down to the reign of George II. The *Memoirs* of Lord Hervey (1696-1743) have much to tell about the politics of the time. The *Diary* of George Bubb Dodington (1691-1762), which covers the space between 1749 and 1761, is remarkable, not merely for the singularly impudent preface of its first editor, but also, as a record of indefatigable place-hunting and unconscious turpitude. None of these, however, makes such good reading as the poorest of the French memoirs we have mentioned;

[1] The *Correspondance secrète politique et littéraire*, 18 vols., London, 1787, is similar in every respect to the work of Bachaumont.

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and sometimes they come perilously near to falling out of the category of literature altogether. One masterpiece of memoir-writing, and no more, can the England of the eighteenth century boast; and its interest lies in the complete self-revelation of the author rather than in the light he casts upon public policy or private intrigue. The *Autobiography*[1] of Edward Gibbon presents a unique combination of truthfulness and affectation. It was written with an eye to the public, and so solicitous was the historian for artistic perfection, that half-a-dozen manuscript drafts form the foundation of the *textus receptus* so skilfully compiled by his executor, Lord Sheffield. Gibbon has paid the usual penalty of candour. The ingenuity of pedants has been strained to convict him out of his own mouth of every species of petty delinquency. His admiration for Lord North has been treated as symptomatic of mental and moral aberration. Each admission which he makes of behaviour falling short of the standard of a Don Quixote, has served to bolster up a charge of baseness and insensibility to honour. But the world has regarded the work with a less jaundiced eye, and has been content to enjoy an inimitable essay in self-portraiture without magnifying the foibles of the painter. None save Gibbon has ventured to celebrate his own affairs in the true grandiloquent strain, or has possessed the steadiness of hand and the tenacity of purpose necessary to bring so daring an experiment to a successful issue. Some of his most majestic sen-

Gibbon's Autobiography.

[1] *Autobiographies*, 1896; another edition, ed. Hill, 1900.

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tences—such as that about the Hampshire grenadier, or the tribute to the genius of Fielding—rank by this time among the favourite tags of the half-educated; but of such purple patches the fame of the book is independent. Rather does it rest upon the perfect "keeping" of the work—the consistency with which the author sustains a mode of treatment *primâ facie* inappropriate to such a theme. Every circumstance of the writer's career is set out with a pomp and solemnity worthy of a Roman emperor; and this is the result of design, not of chance, for Gibbon knew what he was about. Hence the work is at once among the most transparently candid and the most ostentatiously artful of autobiographies ever written.

Letter-writers.

As regards correspondence, England is better off. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's later correspondence, which often deals with literary matters, is delightful. Adam Smith was an agreeable, Johnson a vigorous, letter-writer. Hume is often admirable as a correspondent. Yet the eminence of none of these three, nor yet of Gibbon, would be sensibly less had their letters perished with them. In Walpole and Chesterfield, however, we have two men whose chief claim to literary distinction lies in their command of a once honoured, though now unpractised, art; and in Gray we have a third whose possession of the same gift is a not unimportant adminicle of his fame.

The first step towards collecting the correspondence of Gray[1] was taken by his intimate friend, William

[1] *Works*, ed. Gosse, 4 vols., 1884; *Letters*, ed. Tovey, vol. i. 1900.

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Mason, whose *Memoir* (1775) of the poet consists of a number of his letters interspersed with passages of biographical narrative and comment. The art of full-dress biography had not yet been discovered, though its inventor was then busily engaged in the accumulation of his materials. Nevertheless, Mason's is a praiseworthy work, with a faint anticipation of Boswell's manner. His labours were superseded by the fidelity and judgment of Mitford; and, although it is only now that a minutely accurate text is being submitted to the public, we have possessed a sufficiently faithful version of the poet's letters for the best part of a century. Gray was master of a large fund of humour as well as of learning. Devoted to his art, and fastidious to the last degree, he never assumed the airs of a superior person, or imagined that he had a mission to set everybody right. We can infer from his writings no enthusiasm for political or social change, and no anxiety to redress other people's grievances. His favourite French author and friend was the younger Crébillon—a choice which seems to call as little for apology as for denunciation. On the other hand, he was free from the weakness of posing as a man of the world, and of sinking his literary predilections to match the pose. He is rarely betrayed into any extravagance of passion; and he surveys the panorama of the world with a keen eye for his neighbours' foibles, but with an indulgent and good-natured smile. His wit is less caustic than Voltaire's; in brilliancy he is unmistakably inferior to Walpole; yet his letters have a subtle

Gray.

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flavour of their own, which justifies the estimation in which they are held by all true connoisseurs.

Horace Walpole.

Horace Walpole[1] (1717-1797) was a close friend of Gray in early life, though a quarrel caused a temporary cessation of their intimacy, and a permanent abatement of its warmth. The chief of his correspondents (a class which includes Montagu, General Conway, the Miss Berrys, and Mme. du Deffand) was Sir Horace Mann, the British envoy at the Court of Tuscany, with whom he regularly exchanged letters from 1741 to 1785. That most of his letters were penned with a view to ultimate publication seems certain. But they are not the less precious on that account. It is they which have procured immortality for their author; not his *Castle of Otranto*, or his *Mysterious Mother*; not his early patronage of Chatterton; not the Gothic architecture of Strawberry Hill; not his thoroughly successful, though cruel, practical joke upon Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Walpole and Chesterfield have this, among other things, in common, that they have been subjected to much virtuous and edifying criticism. We have been told *ad nauseam* that Walpole was no better than a heartless trifler, of whose life affectation was the very essence. His castellated villa at Twickenham, his printing-press, his collection of curiosities, have all been held up to ridicule by a century which perpetrated thrice as many horrors in the name of Gothic as Walpole's did. His real abilities have too often been lost sight of by

[1] *Letters*, ed. Peter Cunningham, 9 vols., 1891.

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critics of the "heavy brigade." Instead of vilipending Walpole because his temperament differed in certain important respects from that of the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury or of the late Mr Gladstone, let us rather take him as he is, and be thankful for him. His affectation, if affectation it be, is innocuous from the literary point of view; nor need the "deep taint" of Gallicism, with which his style is said to be imbued, cause us much concern. The nine volumes of his correspondence supply us with an incomparably entertaining picture of an age which presents many superficial points of difference from our own, and of a society the antecedent conditions of whose structure are little likely to be reproduced. He has been taxed with inability to appreciate the really great men of letters of his time; but it is his very attitude of independence which makes what he wrote so well worth reading. A mere echo of the opinions of the Johnsonian circle would have been immeasurably less impressive than his frank indication of the views held by a number of persons destitute neither of taste nor of intelligence. That he was often influenced in his estimate of men by narrow considerations is true enough. To write as though the elder Pitt had been nothing but "a strutting, ranting, mouthing actor," is to express barely a half truth. Yet even his limitations are instructive, nor are they likely to mislead the judgment of any rational human being. The manner in which he champions the memory of his father shows that he was far removed from insensibility to those generous and elevating emotions of which almost all men have

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a tincture; and it seems injudicious to quarrel with a man because he makes no pretence of being better than his neighbours.

Chesterfield.

If Horace Walpole has been chastised with whips, Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield[1] (1694-1773), has been chastised with scorpions. Walpole has been set down as a *pococurante* and a fribble, Chesterfield as a libertine and (like Socrates) a corrupter of youth. Johnson's terse and forcible summary of the teaching of the *Letters written to his Son* (first published by that son's widow in 1775) clings to the book, and helps to obscure the fact that Chesterfield was one of the very ablest men of his day. There is just enough truth in Johnson's epigram to give it the proper sting. But to talk of Chesterfield inculcating upon his son "the great duty of licentiousness," or otherwise to represent him as the wicked nobleman of transpontine melodrama, is merely ridiculous.

The *Letters* of Lord Chesterfield are, of course, totally different in aim and intention from those of Walpole. They do not profess to communicate to their youthful recipient the current gossip of the day. Their object is to form his character; and it is beyond dispute that the precepts which they instil are not exactly counsels of perfection. These precepts would be unsuitable for the ethical code of a new religion; nor is the standard of morality to which they aspire much higher than that represented by the serviceable warning, "Never get

[1] *Letters to his Son*, ed. Stanhope, 5 vols., 1845-53; *Letters to his Godson*, ed. Carnarven, Oxford: 1889; *Life*, by Ernst: 1893.

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drunk in the afternoon." But Chesterfield's genuine solicitude for the welfare of his son, in this world if not in the next, is everywhere apparent; and the same willingness to take infinite pains for the object of his affection is displayed in the *Letters to his Godson*, a child of much more tender years. Upon virtues like courage, honesty, and truthfulness, Chesterfield utters no uncertain sound; and, if in other matters he shows a disposition to accommodate high ideals to the actual conditions of an evil world, the difference between him and many more pretentious moralists is not one of kind so much as of degree.

But for us the didactic value of the letters matters little. We know that in point of fact they failed in their object, that the sow's ear was never converted into a silk purse, and that Philip Stanhope remained plain John Trott. Their importance lies in the revelation they afford of their author's temperament, and in the delicacy and finish which mark the style. Most treatises which deal with manners, or with the questions in solving which manners and morals become indistinguishable, are marred by a certain heavy-handedness. To labour a proposition as to good behaviour is generally to make a mountain of a mole-hill. From this fault Chesterfield is extraordinarily free. He steers between the trite though polished generalisations of a Polonius, and the cut-and-dried instructions of a handbook of etiquette. All he says is illuminated by the wisdom that comes of accurate observation, and a thorough knowledge of at least a section of mankind. An agreeable wit diversifies

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every page; and the *soupçon* of insolence which is occasionally interjected is far from spoiling the highly-seasoned compound. Chesterfield did not succeed in writing the schoolboy's *vade mecum* to virtue; but he did succeed in committing to paper the most complete expression of a view of life which stands the wear and tear of practice at least as well as many others which profess to be supported by more abstruse and philosophical principles.

When we cross the Channel, we find that the name of the writers whose letters have come down to us is legion. Putting the indefatigable Voltaire and the irrepressible Diderot aside, we may say that the women were as industrious as the men. It is noteworthy that, whatever their lapses into the commonplace and the humdrum, they all, like the memoir-writers, become intensely interesting the moment they touch on Voltaire. Thus it is with Mme. de Graffigny; thus it is with Mme. Suard. Mme. Geoffrin, Mme. d'Épinay, and Mlle. de L'Espinasse were possessed of far greater gifts and higher attainments than they; but it is surely no mere fancy which detects in the letters of the two last (apart from Mlle. de L'Espinasse's love-letters, which are unique in their sincerity and passion, and which, therefore, possess little to attract an age which revels in the bogus variety of the commodity) all the symptoms which denote that increase of knowledge has meant for the writers increase of sorrow. They had tasted all the delicacies which "philosophy" had to afford; and they were haunted by the uneasy suspicion, if not the certainty, that they

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had spent their labour on that which satisfieth not. The letters of Mme. du Deffand also are full of a sense of disappointment and melancholy. But she had never deceived herself; no process of disillusionment was in her case necessary; and the darkening of the windows of the house merely threw an additional shade of gloom over the prospect of life as it had always presented itself to her eyes. Her letters are incomparably superior in depth of feeling and of wisdom to those of any rival of her own sex; and none of them are more pathetic and touching than the ones addressed to Horace Walpole.

Mme. du Deffand.

Of all letter-writers Voltaire was probably the most prolific. The standard edition of his works contains no fewer than 10,465 specimens of his correspondence: a figure which, taking his epistolary life at sixty-four years, yields the respectable yearly average of close upon 164. Of this mass of letters it may be said that all are brilliant. Voltaire could not help giving of his best when the pen was once in his fingers. His matchless wit began to play round the subject which interested him for the moment; and the perfect lucidity, the easy grace, and the exquisite finish of his style converted a few trivial lines into a little masterpiece. No man ever turned a compliment or accepted an invitation with half his adroitness and dexterity; and Voltaire's works must be supplemented by Voltaire's letters if we would form a just conception of his character and abilities. Of Diderot as a correspondent we have already said

Voltaire.

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enough. The *Lettres familières* of the President de Brosses give an excellent account of his travels in Italy in 1739 and 1740; while the shrewdness and sense of humour which distinguished the *Traité des Blès* did not fail Galiani in the less formal and exacting task of writing to his friends in Paris from the land of his nativity and exile. Lastly, we may mention the letters written by various hands to keep foreign ministers and foreign potentates *au courant* of affairs in the French capital. By far the most celebrated collection of such *Nouvelles à la main* is the *Correspondance littéraire*, edited by Grimm, which has been already mentioned, and which brings us by a natural transition to a consideration of journalism in so far as connected with literature.

Journalism in England.

The English journalism[1] of our period naturally falls into three classes: the newspapers proper, the periodicals modelled on the *Spectator*, and the monthly reviews. Politics was the characteristic topic of the first, manners of the second, and literature, in the shape of new publications, of the third. The three divisions occasionally overlapped. Thus Fielding's *True Patriot* (1745), *Jacobites' Journal* (1748), and *Covent Garden Journal* (1752), which in form belong to the *Spectator* type, pay at least as much attention to political as to

[1] For the history of English journalism, consult Grant, *The Newspaper Press*, 3 vols., 1871-72; and Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, 2 vols., 1887; neither of which, however, is by any means a satisfactory work.

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social criticism; while Smollett's *Briton* (1762) and Wilkes's more celebrated counterblast, *The North Briton* (1762-63), were expressly founded, the one for the support, the other for the overthrow, of a particular administration. The monthly reviews would take occasion to insinuate the political opinions of their conductors under the pretext of noticing a book. Similarly, the newspapers found space for less serious matters than the misdeeds of ministers or the posture of foreign affairs. *Robinson Crusoe* was reprinted as a serial in the *London Post*. *Captain Singleton* made its first appearance by instalments in the *Exeter Postman, or Loyal Mercury*. Johnson's *Idler* came out every Saturday between 1758 and 1760 in Newbery's *Universal Chronicle*. Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* contributed largely to the success of the same proprietor's *Public Ledger* (1760). Still, the lines of division which we have indicated are substantially correct, as well as convenient for our purpose.

Political Journalism.

The most able political journal of our period was undoubtedly *The Craftsman* (1726-37), the organ of the opposition to Walpole. Bolingbroke and Pulteney were of its contributors; its editor was Nicholas Amhurst (1697-1742), the conductor of a shortlived bi-weekly called *Terræ Filius*, which in 1721 had made the University of Oxford its special object of attack. The writers in the press were for the most part less remarkable for their ability than their licence, and they habitually assailed their opponents with a ferocity of temper

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and an exuberance of language to which we have long been unaccustomed. The famous Number 45 of the *North Briton* is remarkable chiefly for scurrility, and in all the declamation about liberty, independence, and despotism which that periodical contains, there is not a single sentence memorable for the justness of its thought or the happy turn of its phrase. But even the *North Briton* was outdone by the *Public Advertiser*, which had started life in 1726 as the *London Daily Post*. Between 1769 and 1772, this journal published, above the signature of "Junius," a series of letters whose fame has been kept alive by the secrecy in which their authorship was from the first involved.[1] We may perhaps be permitted to wonder that busy men should have thought it worth while to vindicate the claim of any one to the paternity of such compositions. For, in truth, there is no fashionable novelist whose efforts have been more egregiously overrated than the *Letters of Junius*. That their author had a villainous temper, and a considerable command of coarse invective, is certain. But his style is radically vicious; he has not the artifice to conceal his unscrupulous partisanship; and, however well calculated his diatribes may have been to inflame the passions of his contemporaries, their effect now is to leave us with the conviction that there

"*Junius.*"

[1] For a lucid summary of the arguments, see Mr Keary's Introduction to *The Francis Letters*, 2 vols., 1901. The preponderance of expert opinion is decidedly for the authorship of Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818).

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was much good in the Duke of Bedford, and that the Duke of Grafton and Miss Nancy Parsons were a sadly maligned couple. In Junius, we are sensible, to use Johnson's phrase, of the venom of the shaft rather than of the vigour of the bow; and nothing could be more just and pointed than the lexicographer's summing up of the mysterious being in his tract on the Falkland Islands: "If we leave him only his merit, what will be his praise?" Yet Junius is a personage of some consequence in English literature. There are faint traces of him in Burke, and strong traces of him in Macaulay. Above all, from him derives the "smart" and "incisive" leader-writer. For over a century Junius has given the cue to this sort of journalist. Whenever ministers are to be annihilated, the weapon employed is the best imitation possible of Junius's pertness, insincerity, and malice; of his strained antithesis, his puerile "scores," and his spurious epigram. So long as we find "violence of outrage," "rage of defamation," and "audacity of falsehood" clothed in language in which the "vivacity of insolence" takes the place of true wit, so long may we be certain that the influence of Francis, or whoever the letter-writer was, is not yet exhausted.

The growing ascendancy of the newspaper press did not extinguish the pamphlet as an engine of political controversy for many a day; and it had great vogue during our period. To read the lists of current publications at the end of the *Monthly*, or the *Critical*, *Review* is to wonder that so many shillings and six-

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pences should have been forthcoming from a comparatively small reading public for the views of anonymous hacks upon the questions of the day. When any event of unusual moment occurred the stream of pamphlets redoubled in volume; and, as the earthquake at Lisbon was responsible for countless sermons and didactic poems, so the execution of Byng, or the Middlesex election, enormously stimulated the production of political tracts. Not many of these fugitive pieces are worth recalling. Three pamphlets of Johnson, however,—*The false Alarm* (1770); *Thoughts on the late transactions respecting Falkland Islands* (1771); and *Taxation no Tyranny* (1775),—stand in the front rank of this class of literature. They are perhaps inferior in merit, as they were assuredly inferior in influence, to two or three acknowledged masterpieces in the kind—to the *Inquiry into the conduct of the Allies*, for example, or to the *Drapier's Letters*. But it may be doubted if they fall much behind even the best of Burke's writings on the French Revolution. True, they are deficient in subtlety, and the maxims which they enforce are not very recondite. But they excel in the trenchant vigour of their language, in the sturdy fortitude of their tone, and in the overwhelming force of their attack. The last in date of the three Johnsonian pamphlets does more than any other work great or small, contemporary or subsequent, to dissipate the sophistries which had accumulated round the discussion of a most important political question.

Johnson's pamphlets.

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Though economic problems were, as we have seen, eagerly debated both in books and in periodicals, the journalists of the Continent, debarred, except in Holland and Switzerland, from current politics as a source of "copy," were compelled to make the best they could of literature, science, and art. This they proceeded to do with a tolerably good grace, and they ranged themselves into literary, in default of political, factions with great alacrity. Almost every considerable clique of literary men had its organ. Thus in Germany *Die Discourse der Mahlern* (1721) was the organ of the Zürich school of writers; *Der Patriot* (1724) of Barthold Heinrich Brockes; *Die Vernünftige Tadlerinnen* (1725) of Gottsched and the classical school of Leipzig; *Die Bremer Beiträge* (1744-48) of the rival school of Gellert; and *Der Teutsche Mercur* (1773 and onwards) of Wieland. In France, practically all other contests were swallowed up in that between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. Of the latter, the most persistent and formidable, besides Palissot and Desfontaines, was Élie Catherine Fréron (1719-76), an indefatigable, and, at times, brilliant journalist, the best of whose work went into the *Année Littéraire*, which he founded in 1754. Fréron was a particular object of Voltaire's animosity, and the Patriarch, together with the whole philosophic senate, suffered severely under the persistent sting of the wasp whom not even *L'Écossaise* could succeed in crushing.

Fréron.

The example of the *Spectator* was not long in telling

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upon Paris. To name no others, Marivaux, as we have noted, was responsible for a *Spectateur français* in 1722-23, and for a *Cabinet du Philosophe* twelve years later. Much superior to either was Prévost's weekly miscellany, *Le Pour et le Contre* (1733-40), which took cognisance of every topic of human interest. But the leading object which its conductor kept steadily in view, was to familiarise the French public with the manners and the literature of foreign countries, more especially of England, whence the earlier numbers were edited. In *Le Journal Étranger* (1754), which passed into Fréron's control in the following year, Prévost followed the same cosmopolitan line; and the Anglicising policy was also pursued by the *Journal Britannique* (1750-55), conducted by Dr Maty in Holland—a country which, considering its size, was well supplied with literary gazettes. But perhaps the most celebrated periodical in Europe was the French *Mercure*, which dated back to 1672, and survived well on into the nineteenth century. The confessedly wide range of Juvenal's satires is contracted compared with that of this miscellany, which, under the editorship of Marmontel, endeavoured to appeal to every conceivable interest and taste, from those of the most eminent *philosophes* down to those of the *bel esprit* of some provincial town who dearly loved to see his occasional madrigal or riddle in print.[1] No passage

Journalism in France.

Marmontel and the Mercure.

[1] It will be remembered that it was in the pages of the *Mercure* that M. Francaleu was able to carry on his poetical flirtation with M. de L'Empirée. (*La Métromanie*, Act ii. sc. 1.)

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in Marmontel's memoirs is more amusing than his description of the *Mercure* under his direction. His satisfaction at the attention bestowed on the latest comet, or the new method of producing ice in summer, is only equalled by the complacency with which he reviews his "discoveries" — such as Malfilâtre, or Delille, or Colardeau, or La Harpe. Never was journal so enlightened, so catholic, so readable; never editor so discriminating, so generous, so just. Alas! His reign was cut prematurely short. Some one, in a fit of the gout, ventured to write a satire on the Duc d'Aumont. The work was falsely attributed to Marmontel, who was arrested, lodged in the Bastille, and finally ejected from the editor's chair. His place was filled by the infamous Lagarde, under whom (need it be said?) the *Mercure* suffered severely both in fame and in circulation, to the no small alarm of the persons whose pensions depended upon its profits. The whole episode is one of the most entertaining and instructive in the history of French journalism during the eighteenth century.

The Spectator *convention.*

No one, so far as we are aware, has yet compiled anything like a complete list of the publications in England which were called into being by the great success of the *Spectator*.[1] Such a catalogue would occupy many pages, and the greater part of its contents would probably have no appreciable relation to literature proper. Here, the first

[1] For the periodicals referred to in the text, see the *British Essayists*, ed. Chalmers, 45 vols., 1808; ed. Ferguson, 40 vols., Edinburgh: 1823.

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name that demands attention, with the exception of some of Fielding's journalistic work already adverted to, is Johnson's *Rambler*, which appeared twice a-week from 1750 to 1752. Upon its decease, Johnson united forces with Dr John Hawkesworth in the *Adventurer*, which flourished between 1752 and 1754, and which boasted as occasional contributors Joseph Warton and Miss Mulso, afterwards Mrs Chapone. The staff of the *World* (1753-56) had greater pretensions to gentility; for under the banner of Edward Moore, of the *Gamester*, were enrolled Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, and Soame Jenyns. But the *Connoisseur* (1754-56), which was conducted by the elder Colman and Bonnell Thornton, and for which the poet Cowper occasionally wrote, if deficient in "blood," was able to hold its own in "brains." Johnson, as we have seen, resumed the weekly essay in the *Idler* (1758-60). But as a light horseman he must yield to Goldsmith, whose natural fitness for the sort of social criticism and character sketch in which Addison had excelled is demonstrated by the *Bee* and the *Busybody* (both 1759), as well as by the Chinese letters republished as the *Citizen of the World*. After the lapse of some years, the convention, which had seen pretty hard service, was revived by Henry Mackenzie in the *Mirror* (1779-80), which he followed up with the *Lounger* (1785-87), and it may be said to have expired, not, assuredly, before its time, with the cessation of Richard Cumberland's *Observer* (1788). All successful literary enterprises produce a crop of more or less faithful imitations. But few have been so

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prolific in this respect as the venture which was initiated by the joint labours of Steele and Addison.

Magazines.

Meanwhile, the appearance of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in 1730, had marked the birth of yet another species of periodical which still survives in undiminished vigour. The *Gentleman's* is chiefly noteworthy to the present generation as being an invaluable storehouse of out-of-the-way information, and as having paved the way for the parliamentary reporter. In due time imitators sprang up, such as the *Scots Magazine* (1739), which lingered into the succeeding century; and during the last twenty years of our period the monthly magazine attained an extraordinary degree of popularity, and even became specialised for particular classes of readers to a remarkable extent. Dr Dodd, the eminent forger, for example, catered for the pious in Newbery's *Christian's Magazine* (1761), while the interests of the gentler sex were studied in the *Lady's Magazine* (1759), which Goldsmith probably edited, and in which his *Life* of Voltaire appeared in instalments during 1761. Among the miscellanies of a more general scope, though literature was their paramount topic, were the shortlived *Edinburgh Review* (1755-56), of which Robertson and Adam Smith were supporters; the *Literary Magazine* (1756), to which its editor, Johnson, contributed his review of Soame Jenyns's *Inquiry into the Origin of Evil*; the *Grand Magazine* (1757), in which Goldsmith possibly had a hand; the *British Magazine* (1760), with which Smollett was connected; the *British Review*, in which

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the same writer's novel, *Sir Lancelot Greaves*, appeared as a serial in 1761; and the *London Review*, which from 1775 until 1779 was the organ of that malignant hack, Kenrick.

The Monthly and the Critical.

But the two most important magazines from our point of view were the *Monthly Review* (1749), by "various hands," and the *Critical Review* (1756), "by a society of gentlemen." The Bacon of the *Monthly* was Griffiths the bookseller, who used it unblushingly to puff his own wares; the Bungay of the *Critical* was Hamilton, a Scotch printer, round whom his countrymen seem to have rallied, and who selected Smollett for his first editor. Goldsmith, it may be parenthetically noted, who was first of all in the pay of Griffiths, latterly transferred his services to the rival periodical. Never did the *Gazette* and the *Independent* of Eatanswill belabour one another with a better will than the *Critical* and the *Monthly*. "In spite of open assault and private assassination, in spite of published reproach and printed letters of abuse, distributed like poisoned arrows in the dark; the *Critical Review* has not only maintained its footing, but considerably extended its progress." Thus Smollett, in the preface to his second volume; and it is the very voice of Pott or Slurk. Yet, with all their absurdities, the contending reviews are of real moment; for they set the convention which the great quarterlies of the next century were careful to follow. Perhaps the most obvious superficial difference between the *Monthly* and *Critical* on the one hand, and the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* on the

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other, is the inordinate amount of space lavished by the former couple upon medical or quasi-medical works. Every number contains at least one notice of a treatise upon some kind of disease, or upon the therapeutic properties of the waters at some *Kurort*. Doubtless, Smollett on the *Critical* and Grainger on the *Monthly* were of the same mind with the cobbler who thought that there was nothing like leather.

Criticism.

There is not much that can be called really good criticism in the reviews and magazines we have mentioned. Certainly no writer of our period made a reputation for himself at all comparable to Jeffrey's in a later age on the strength of a long series of literary reviews. In France criticism was less ponderous and more entertaining; but even in France the very best criticism rather lurks in detached passages, struck off in the heat of the moment, and scattered up and down the collections of correspondence, than courts public notice in set pieces. Diderot's excursions into criticism have been already noticed. Voltaire's *Commentaire sur Corneille* (1764), his most formal and ambitious effort in the capacity of critic, is instructive enough as illustrating his point of view, and contains observations which are illuminating and suggestive. But the mould into which his theories are cast—a commentary upon the text of his author's dramas—is the reverse of attractive, and if Voltaire ever seems touched with pedantry it is here. There are two works, however, which merit somewhat special mention as types of the school of criticism which, after enjoying an almost unchallenged

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supremacy for many years, found itself ousted towards the close of our period by a band of daring innovators.

Marmontel's Éléments.

Marmontel's *Éléments de Littérature*[1] (1787) is a reprint of the articles upon literary topics which he had contributed to the *Encyclopédie* nearly thirty years before. They are arranged in alphabetical order; and, under such titles as *burlesque, comédie, délicatesse, enthousiasme, mœurs, opéra, poésie, ton, tragédie, vers,* and many others, he discusses several important and interesting questions, always with unflagging liveliness and imperturbable good-humour. It would probably be impossible to represent the results of so comprehensive a budget in a few categorical propositions; but his general temper and attitude are not difficult to gather. The one essential quality in Marmontel's view is *le goût,* which forms the subject of the introductory essay prefixed to his collection. Now it may seem no very startling pronouncement that taste is an indispensable part of the critic's equipment. But the point is that, for Marmontel, as for all the *philosophe* party, the term *goût* is inextricably bound up with the indefinable associations suggested by the idea of *les honnêtes gens,* or *la bonne compagnie.* The standard of excellence is fixed by "the people one meets," or the people with whom one sups, and, unless the would-be critic happens to have caught the exact tone of a particular section of society, no natural faculty for the appreciation of literature or art, however well developed, will

[1] *Œuvres,* 18 vols., London: 1818-19.

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be of any avail. There could certainly be no better or more prepossessing spokesman for this mode of approaching critical questions than Marmontel himself, who is all candour and intelligence. When he talks anything suspiciously like nonsense (and his explanation of the superiority of the English in poetry deserves no more flattering qualification) we may be sure that the nonsense is not really *his*, but is the nonsense of the *salons*. He makes a gallant struggle to understand works with which he can have had little sympathy at heart; yet he never succeeds in throwing off the limitations and restrictions of his age. Thus he admits that Shakespeare has "un mérite réel et transcendant qui frappe tout le monde: il est tragique, il touche, il émeut fortement" (art. *Poésie*). The admission is generous in the extreme, and there, we might have supposed, was an end of the matter. But the panegyric concludes with the significant and wholesome reminder that "tout l'enthousiasme de ses admirateurs n'en imposera jamais aux gens de bon sens et de goût sur ses grossièretés barbares."

La Harpe's Cours de Littérature.

The *Lycée, ou Cours de Littérature*[1] of Jean François de La Harpe (1739-1803) falls outside our period in point of date, and in fact was composed, for the most part, during the Revolution. But in tone and spirit it may be looked upon as the swan-song of pseudo-classical criticism. The work is most ambitious in scope, for it aims at being no less than "une histoire raisonnée de

[1] Sixteen vols., 1799-1805.

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tous les arts de l'esprit et de l'imagination depuis Homère jusqu'à nos jours," the physical and exact sciences alone being excluded from review. In his treatment of the ancient writers La Harpe cannot be said to be particularly inspiring. It is when he comes to the writers of his own generation that his comments grow worthy of attentive consideration. At one time himself a hanger-on of *philosophes*, he lived to see the results of "philosophical" speculation presented in a concrete form; with the consequence that he underwent a complete revulsion of thought and feeling. He delights in recording the great Frederick's contemptuous remark that, if he wished to punish a province, he could not do so more severely than by subjecting it to the government of *philosophes;* he opines that D'Alembert would have succumbed to the exquisite humiliation of seeing his sublime *philosophie* translated into *sansculottisme;* and, having survived a period in which to be suspected of belonging to *les honnêtes gens* was to be proscribed, he vigorously recants the opinions of his prime in all matters save one.

For in literary criticism La Harpe remains a rigid Conservative. His views are less elastic as regards the fundamentals than Marmontel's. He is wise enough, to be sure, to know that the rules of art can only be deduced from the work of the great artists. But he is no believer in untutored genius: innumerable predecessors must have gone to the making of Homer. He describes the view that genius knows and heeds nothing of "art" as a *paradoxe insensé.* He

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denounces Le Tourneur, the translator of Shakespeare, for talking of the illustrious writers who have "dédaigné d'avoir du goût." He admits, with evident reluctance, that the accepted canons of art may be transgressed in order to attain its great ends; but he maintains that the really fine passages in Milton and Dante (whose poems generally he characterises as "ouvrages monstrueux") are fine only because in them the principles of the ancients have been scrupulously applied. There is much in all this which is salutary, and La Harpe puts his case with tolerable fairness. Yet, despite the force and candour which he brings to the exposition of his tenets, we welcome far more heartily his outbursts of fresh and original criticism. The most famous of such expressions of opinion is that in which, after having disposed of Richardson, he addresses himself to Fielding. *Joseph Andrews*, he explains, is too English to be appreciated by a foreigner. But, he adds (and the judgment must have astounded his contemporaries), "pour moi, le premier roman du monde c'est *Tom Jones*." The phrase, as we have mentioned, was afterwards borrowed by Alfred de Musset and applied to *Clarissa*.

Of the English excursions into criticism, one of the most ambitious was *A Philosophical Inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). Johnson pronounced it "an example of true criticism"; Lessing and Kant were powerfully influenced by it; and its importance in the literature of what is called "æsthetic" is in-

Burke's Inquiry.

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disputable. Yet its best title to remembrance lies in the eminence of its author in another sphere; for of all Edmund Burke's writings [1] this seems assuredly the most laboured and the least attractive. Here and there we find passages which the modes of expression employed (so strangely obsolete to the modern ear) do not hinder from being pregnant with more or less valuable suggestion. The fifth and last section, for example, is undeniably interesting; and the paradox, that the effect produced by words in no wise depends upon their power of conjuring up sensible images of the things for which they stand, is defended with considerable ingenuity; though the unfortunate illustration of Dr Blacklock, the blind poet, proves a great deal too much. Apart from the soundness of the theories which it develops, the *Inquiry* is apt to be heavy. No patches of Burke's splendid rhetoric relieve its monotony; and in point of clearness and vivacity it suffers notably by comparison with the fifteen *Discourses* [2] delivered by Sir Joshua Reynolds to the students of the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790. Sir Joshua insists very strongly upon the "great style" in painting,

Reynolds's Discourses.

[1] *Works*, ed. Rogers, 2 vols., 1841. See also Morley, *Burke* (English Men of Letters), 1880. The contrast between the harsh and unprepossessing style of the *Inquiry* and the flowing manner of the *Vindication of Natural Society*, a tract published in the same year to ridicule the views of Bolingbroke, is sufficiently striking. It should be added that the greater part of Burke's really important work, whether oratory or pamphleteering, belongs to a date outside our limits; and it has accordingly been thought expedient to reserve the full consideration of it for the next volume.

[2] Ed. Zimmern, 1887.

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and warns his hearers against "the imaginary powers of native genius and its sufficiency in great works." Invention, he declares, can only be acquired by familiarity with the inventions of others; and the surest means to the desired end is to be found in the imitation of good artists. Reynolds's eminently sane advice has proved a stumbling-block to modern art-critics of the "high-flying" school. His recommendation, for instance, that nature herself should not be too closely copied, has occasioned much searching of heart and much shaking of heads. In one view, no doubt, it savours of the "streaks of the tulip" heresy. But, rightly apprehended, it means that the first secret of true art consists in selection. Such counsel will always seem pernicious to the class of critics who love a painting in proportion to the number it happens to contain of insignificant particulars which will supply an excuse for an anecdote or a peg for a moral.

The two Wartons.

Two of the most eminent English literary critics of our period were the brothers Warton. The elder, Joseph (1722-1800), published the first volume of his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* in 1756. The second and concluding instalment did not appear until 1782. In the interval, what must originally have seemed daring paradoxes had become, if not accepted truisms, at all events familiar opinions. Joseph Warton's main thesis is that Pope is "not at the head of his profession," as he chooses to express it. He distinguishes "betwixt a man of wit, a man of sense, and a true

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poet"; and he holds that a creative and glowing imagination are necessary to stamp a writer with the last-named "exalted and very uncommon character." His criticisms take the form of an exhaustive commentary on the writings of a particular poet; but they cover a much wider field; and they are illustrated by apposite quotations and instances to support his contentions. His learning was extensive and accurate; his judgment cool and independent. He was among the earliest of modern scholars to do justice to "the noblest descriptive poem extant, I mean that of Lucretius"; and he had no compunction in denouncing Congreve's *Mourning Bride* as "a despicable performance."

His brother Thomas (1728-1790) was, perhaps, less outspoken and pugnacious, but was even more learned. His career as a critic had opened with some *Observations upon Spenser* (1754). It required twenty years of additional toil to complete the first volume of his *magnum opus*, the *History of English Poetry*. The remaining portions appeared in 1778 and 1781, but his death took place before the accomplishment of the whole of his original design. Every one, with the exception of Ritson, has praised Thomas Warton's *History*. Much has been discovered since he ceased to write. The *quellen* of English literature have been sounded with exemplary care. But Warton's work has never been superseded. He discovered many facts previously unknown, and passed in review many authors who had for long been considered too "barbarous" for the taste of a polite community. Never-

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theless, he betrays none of the bustling self-importance which too often marks the critic by whom an ancient writer of eminence has been *déterré;* nor is he ever deserted by his sound and temperate judgment. His book still remains in the front rank of our achievements in the field of criticism, excelled by hardly any other than the work of which it now remains for us to speak.

Johnson's Lives of the Poets.

Close upon a quarter of a century separates Johnson's *Lives of the most eminent of the English Poets* (*supra*, p. 108) from his famous *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). In the course of that period his chief formal contribution to criticism had been the *Preface* to his edition of Shakespeare (1765), in some respects a perfunctory, in others, a masterly, performance. As regards the *Lives*, the praise which critics have bestowed has not seldom been grudging, and very often patronising. Confronted with a rare variety of excellences, they have seasoned their encomiums by virtuous denunciations of, or elaborate apologies for, Johnson's supposed shortcomings — his violent "prejudices," his melancholy narrowness of view, his incurable dulness of ear, his harrowing insensibility to æsthetic impressions. Now, Johnson's *Lives* is valuable as an overflowing treasury of literary tradition, though not of antiquarian "research"; it is valuable by reason of its inimitable personal digressions, of which that on Gilbert Walmsley is the most celebrated; it is valuable for its just and vigorous commentary on life and character, of which the best illustration is afforded by the observations

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upon Milton. But these merits are overtopped by the greatness of the *Lives* as an essay in literary criticism. To attempt to digest their critical principles into a code, which Boswell proposed as a task for some modern Aristotle or Longinus, would probably be vain. All that the space at our disposal admits of is the merest glance at one or two of Johnson's leading ideas.

It is a simple and popular mode of estimating a great work of criticism to test the author's opinions by their conformity with the accepted views of our own day. We take Johnson's attack upon the metaphysical poetry of Cowley and his school, and we say, What admirable reasoning! We take his comments upon Milton's *Lycidas*, and we say, What deplorable obtuseness! We never pause to inquire whether the ground of both judgments is not identical; and whether (as is in fact the case) they do not equally depend upon canons of sincerity which may be right or which may be wrong. What the present-day critic has to do, and shows no signs of doing, is to explain why those canons should be applicable to the work of the one poet and not to that of the other. The *Lives* cannot be judged by elegant extracts, such as the comparison of Pope and Dryden. The teaching of the book must be gathered from a reasonable construction of the whole. Yet it would be a grave mistake to suppose that Johnson was much of a believer in the "rules of art," or in any sort of criticism which professes to be "scientific." He knew that the ear, and not the finger, must supply the test

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of poetry; and that a mere "collection of theorems" would be of small assistance in judging of any work of art. In spite of inconsistencies of expression, he clings to the fundamental principle that the object of poetry is to give pleasure. It is from this root that Johnson's most characteristic views—his preference for rhyme, for instance—spring. He may or may not have been right in supposing that pleasure is best provided by making new things appear familiar and familiar things new. The cardinal point is that this great moralist committed himself to the proposition that the primary business of poetry is, not to edify, nor to propagate sound moral or political principles, but, to *please*. He does not, it is true, enter into any formal discussion of the relations subsisting between art and morals, and he was by much too sensible and astute to tie himself down to any such formula as "art for art's sake." But he states his conclusion plainly enough; and it is a conclusion which no other critic of his generation had been bold enough to suggest. Voltaire and Diderot, whatever their practice, will have none of it in their set criticism. Rousseau would have repudiated it with horror. La Harpe and Marmontel are clear about the serious purpose which ought to animate all departments of literature. Comedy, for example, according to La Harpe, is "un tableau moral"; whence it follows that, the larger the number of people whom it instructs and edifies, the more it possesses the merit of attaining its chief end. Marmontel qualifies a reluctant admission that the aim of poetry is to give pleasure by the addition that "toute

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poésie un peu sérieuse doit avoir son objet d'utilité, son but moral." It is surely a singular paradox that one whose crowning distinction is justly conceived to have been won in the region of morals, should have struck a blow to liberate literary criticism from the fetters with which, in all stages of its existence, so many of its most eminent professors have conspired to hamper it.[1]

[1] It may perhaps be worth while to note briefly three other works in criticism which were famous in their day. One is Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762), a curious mixture of fidelity to the conventional with something very like originality. Another is the *Sermons* (1783) of Hugh Blair (*supra*, p. 122), which embody the full orthodox creed of the pseudo-classical school. The third is the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) of Principal Campbell (*supra*, p. 114), a much fresher, more stimulating, and in every respect superior performance, which on some topics still holds its own.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE REST OF EUROPE: POSTSCRIPT.

GERMANY AND HOLLAND: GERMANY — GOTTSCHED — HIS OPPONENTS—GELLERT — HALLER — GESSNER—KLOPSTOCK — WIELAND—"ILLUMINISM"—FREDERICK THE GREAT—HOLLAND.

SCANDINAVIA: DANISH-NORWEGIAN LITERATURE — EWALD AND WESSEL —SWEDISH LITERATURE—LINNÆUS AND SWEDENBORG.

ITALY AND THE PENINSULA: ITALY — SCHOLARS AND JURISTS — THE ARCADIA—PARINI—OPERA AND METASTASIO—COMEDY AND GOLDONI —GOZZI AND THE REVIVAL OF THE OLD COMEDY — PORTUGAL—SPAIN—FRENCH INFLUENCE SUPREME—ISLA AND 'FRAY GERUNDIO' —RAMON DE LA CRUZ AND HIS 'SAINETES.'

POSTSCRIPT: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS—ACQUIESCENCE IN THE ORDER OF THINGS—THE "SIÈCLE DES LUMIÈRES" THEORY—OPTIMISM OF THE "PHILOSOPHES" AND OF THE ECONOMISTS — SUBMISSION TO THE INEVITABLE — ATTITUDE OF THE NOVELISTS TO LIFE — THEIR SANITY—PSEUDO-STOICISM—EARNESTNESS OF J.-J. ROUSSEAU—THE STUDY OF MAN — THE "CLASSICAL" TRADITION — THE CENTURY AND ITS CRITICS—CONCLUSION.

ENGLAND and France, as we have already said, were by far the most generous contributors to the stock of European literature in the mid-eighteenth century. The rest of Europe yielded little or nothing to the common fund. What the Continent produced has thus to a great extent been already disposed of, and

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the remainder may be dealt with in a comparatively brief summary. It should be premised that of Hungary, during this period, the literature is non-existent; that of Bohemia the literature is insignificant; and that of Russia, such literature as there is, is so far cut off from that of the non-Mongolian nations, though undoubtedly susceptible of their influence, as to fall outside the scope of this series.

Germany and Holland.

Germany.

The relation of Germany[1] to the civilised world, in a literary point of view, was emphatically that of a recipient, not of a giver. German literature[2] for more than one generation in the immediate past had been without form, though not wholly void. Before it could fulfil its splendid destiny, its extravagances had to be pruned; and, while order and regularity had to be introduced into German speech and grammar, restraint and moderation required to be imposed upon the aims and ideals of German men of letters.

The principal agent in carrying out these indispensable reforms was Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700-1766), than whom no more estimable and yet

[1] It has been thought convenient to include the German-Swiss writers under this head.

[2] In addition to Hettner, *op. cit.*, ch. i. *supra*, see W. Scherer, *Geschichte der Deutschen Litteratur*, 8th ed., Berlin: 1899; English trans. by Mrs Conybeare, 2nd ed., Oxford: 1891; Kuno Francke, *History of German Literature*, 1901; Gostwick and Harrison, *Outlines of German Literature*, 2nd ed., 1883; Vilmar, *Geschichte der Deutschen National Litteratur*, 2 vols., 1885.

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pathetic figure is to be discerned in the literary annals of contemporary Europe. He disseminated his views from his chair in the university of Leipzig, and through the medium of a periodical entitled *Die Vernünftige Tadlerinnen* (1725), which enjoyed a great reputation. But a still more important instrument in his hands was the theatre, where he enjoyed the assistance of the most accomplished actress on the German stage, to say nothing of a wife complacent enough to illustrate in her own plays her husband's dramatic theories. These were all generated by an intense admiration of French classicism, the precepts of which Gottsched endeavoured to apply to the literature of his own country. No one can question the value of his crusade against the "second Silesian" school of poetry; nor is it a small matter that he purged the drama of the Lohenstein influence—of that mixture of bombastic horrors with gross buffoonery, which until his advent had been its most noteworthy feature. Yet his own practice is a poor recommendation of his principles. His poems are sad stuff, and his *chef-d'œuvre* in tragedy, the severely correct *Sterbender Cato* (1732), is frigid and unmoving. His *Kritische Dichtkunst* (1730) and his *Deutsche Sprachkunst* (1748) possess more solid and lasting merit than many of his more pretentious efforts, for, like most reformers, he excelled in the work of destruction rather than in that of building up. If he has added nothing of permanent value to the literature, he has at least left his mark upon the language, of his country.

Gottsched.

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Gottsched was the founder of the "German Society" in Leipzig, and for long reigned supreme in the literary and academic circles of that university town. A man of his ability, learning, and character could not fail to collect a band of more or less enthusiastic disciples. But neither could a man of his limited vision and dogmatic habit of mind fail to excite opposition. From the closing years of the 'thirties onwards his influence began to decay. A rival school arose which perversely chose to draw its inspiration from English literature in preference to French, and paradoxically maintained that genius, imagination, and a sense of the mysterious and wonderful, were of more consequence in poetry than the highest degree of correctness and the most rigid conformity to rule. Two of the leaders of this sect were natives of Zürich: Johann Jakob Breitinger (1701-1776), and Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698-1783), the latter of whom published a prose translation of the *Paradise Lost* in 1732, and subsequently helped forward the Romantic movement by recalling to the minds of his contemporaries much of the mediæval literature of Germany. Considerable assistance was rendered to the Swiss brethren by Christian Felix Weisse (1726-1804), who became the mainstay of opera and operetta on the Leipzig stage, and finally, with his gift for easy and melodious versification, ousted the classical drama of the French type. The actress, Caroline Neuber, Gottsched's mainstay, went over to the enemy; nay, his very wife proved unfaithful in a literary sense. He who had once been looked up to

His opponents.

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as a dictator in all matters of taste and criticism fell upon evil days and evil tongues; and the younger generation looked upon him as hopelessly "behind the age."

But probably the most useful recruit to the opposition was Christian Furchtegott Gellert[1] (1715-69), who attacked the already tottering supremacy of Gottsched in the *Bremer Beiträge* (1744-48), and acquired a great vogue with all classes, and both sexes, of his compatriots. Though no more than fifteen years separated his birth from that of Gottsched, the difference between them in temperament and point of view is that of at least a generation. Gellert's soul was penetrated with "sensibility." He wept torrents of admiring tears over *Sir Charles Grandison*. He was the chosen confidant of many young women, who consulted him about their love affairs. His professorial lectures at Leipzig were attended by eager audiences. Yet Gellert had discretion, and was something of a man of the world. In his celebrated interview with Frederick the Great, he displayed such adroitness and tact as made the monarch pronounce him to be "le plus raisonnable de tous les savans Allemands"—a very different person from Gottsched. As for his bold claim to be "original," the less said about that the better. His *Fabeln und Erzählungen* (1746-48) are sufficiently smooth and agreeable. Such titles as "Die Nachtigall und die Lerche" or "Der Baronisirte Bürger" indicate their general line. He gives us a witty, though somewhat obvious, com-

Gellert.

[1] *Sämmtliche Schriften*, 10 vols., Leipzig: 1784.

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mentary upon human foibles, rather than caustic satire levelled at human vices. The *Moralische Charakteren* appended to the collection of Fables are similar in tone and tendency. Gellert makes his points neatly, and his *technique* is workmanlike, but both Fables and Characters are pure Lafontaine. The anti-Gottsched school set too great store by the Fable. Yet nothing could have been better for the German language than that men like Hagedorn, and Gellert, and Wieland should have deliberately attempted to emulate the dexterity and skill of the French master. Of Gellert's other work there is little to be said. He wrote a novel with the name of *Leben der Schwedischen Gräfin von G——* (1746), and he contributed a few comedies to the stage. But his best title to remembrance is his *Geistliche Oden und Lieder* (1757), in which he maintained that unbroken tradition of success in the writing of sacred lyrics which is a striking feature of German literature, and which appears flatly to contradict Dr Johnson's theories on the subject.

Independently of the controversy between the contending factions of the Leipzig school, two poets, exactly contemporary with one another, had been working out their own literary salvation. Friedrich von Hagedorn (1708-54) produced fables, tales, odes, and songs, besides *Moralische Gedichte.* He is never averse from pointing a moral, but his tone is much less severe than that of Albrecht von Haller (1708-77), a native of Berne, who was educated at the university of Göttingen. The whole of Haller's work is deliberately didactic; and he

Haller.

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is no exception to the general rule, that to be didactic is to be fatiguing. His most famous work, *Die Alpen* (1729), written in rhymed stanzas of ten lines, is certainly less interesting on its merits than instructive as a type; for it anticipates the line of thought which was to be followed out by his compatriot, J.-J. Rousseau. He sings the praises of poverty and of the hardy Swiss peasant; he deplores the yoke under which half of Europe groans; he rebukes the heartlessness and the vices of the rich and powerful. But he comes no nearer to truth and reality than the most mannered Court poet who ever sang of shepherds and shepherdesses. Half a century later Crabbe was ruthlessly to expose the pleasing fiction that narrow means are a guarantee of all the virtues. Meanwhile, the Swiss peasant communities of Haller were as purely imaginary as the society of a mythical Olympus; and his must be numbered among the well-meant but futile attempts of able men to get "back to nature" by the wrong road. Ewald von Kleist, whose *Frühling* (1749) we have already mentioned, was not so far off the right path. But all such misdirected effort culminates in the performances of

Gessner.

Salomon Gessner (1730-88), a Zürich bookseller. His *Idyllen*, of which the first instalment appeared in 1756, and the last in 1772, are all that is artificial and tedious. The dreary old puppets, and the battered apparatus of the pastoral property room, are dutifully displayed before the somnolescent reader; and nymphs and swains discover and conceal their mutual "flame" with the

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traditional accompaniment of tears, groans, and sighs. The *Idyllen* are outdone, if possible, by the egregious *Tod Abel's* (1758), a prose epic in five cantos, reeking of tenderness and sensibility, bristling with marks of exclamation, and doubtless considered by its author to be a happy imitation of the sublime Milton.

There is one German poet, however, who, albeit we cannot now relish much of his most applauded work, must always command a certain share of admiration.

Klopstock.

Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803) did more for the extinction of the "classical" school and the progress of the new movement than any other author except Lessing. A Prussian by origin, he caught from Bodmer and Gellert their enthusiasm for English literature, and in particular for Milton, Thomson, and the inevitable Young.[1] At the age of twenty-four, Klopstock published in the *Bremer Beiträge* the first three cantos of a sacred epic in hexameters—*Der Messias*—which it took him twenty-five years to complete by the addition of other seventeen books, and which, when completed, contained, in round numbers, some 20,000 lines. Milton was his ostensible model in handling the most sublime of all themes; but there is little of the Miltonic in a work which is spasmodic, ill-constructed, and rhapsodical. It displays, however, a genuine dithyrambic, or, at the worst, rhetorical, talent; and, having had the good fortune to be violently attacked by Gottsched, it became the *oriflamme*, so to

[1] "Aber bleibe meine Lehrer; Stirb und werde mein Genius." So in 1752 he addresses the author of the *Night Thoughts*.

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speak, of the anti-Gottsched party. It is to his *Odes*, composed in various years, that we must turn to find the true Klopstock. Written in unrhymed verse and in the classical metres (the alcaic being one of his special favourites), they breathe a spirit of unselfishness and patriotism, of which their dignified and often sonorous diction is not unworthy. His two or three war-songs strike the true note; and it is significant that he was among the first to restore to the poetry of his country its old gods and heroes. *Hermann und Thusnelda* (1752) marks an important point in the literary annals of Germany; and the fact that before very long the Norse and Teutonic mythology became highly fashionable in Europe, should not make us forget the example set by Klopstock any more than the antiquarian research of Gottsched or Bodmer.

Wieland.

Upon no young fellow of his time did Klopstock's influence operate more powerfully than upon Christoph Martin Wieland[1] (1733-1813), whose long life was one of ceaseless energy and extraordinary productiveness. With the single-heartedness of youth, Wieland plunged into all sorts of edifying composition, including the epic; and the fact that he was a "son of the manse" no doubt predisposed him strongly to that high-pitched strain of religious enthusiasm which characterised his model. Before he was out of his teens he had been "taken up" by Bodmer, who brought him to be his guest at Zürich. But there was no fundamental community of temperament between them; and before another de-

[1] *Sämmtliche Werke*, 42 vols., Leipzig: 1794-1801.

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cade of his life had passed, the rising hope of the "high-flyers" had become a stalwart "moderate." *Komische Erzählungen* (1766) replaced *Hermann.* Milton and Klopstock yielded to Shakespeare, the greater part of whose dramatic works was translated by Wieland between 1762 and 1766. This transition is not unprecedented, nor in Wieland's case can it be deplored. By his grace, vivacity, and ease, he did much to free the literature of his country from the bondage of uncompromising solemnity, though to rival the consummate success of his French exemplars was an impossibility. By doing what he did, he enlisted the interest and support of powerful classes of his countrymen to whom the rhapsodies of mysticism made little if any appeal.[1]

There is nothing so fatal to pseudo-classicism as a true knowledge of the ancients; and the revival of classical learning in Germany was one of the most significant features of the era of which we speak. Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812) represents that revival on the side of scholarship, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) represents it in its broader aspects. His *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Kunstwerke* (1755) and his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764) are works which have deeply affected all subsequent speculation on the subject. Wieland fell within the sweep of this important movement; and the extent to which he was carried away by it is shown in his *Agathon* (1766-67),

[1] His best work in this light vein will be found in the seven-volume edition of his *Auserlesene Gedichte*, published in 1787.

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which is really a history of his own mental development thrown into the form of a Greek novel; his *Musarion* (1768); and his *Die Abderiten* (1774), an amusing enough satire on the life of the middle classes in Germany, who had already found a Juvenal, or, rather, an Addison, in Gottlieb Rabener (1714-1771). But in the last phase of his creative activity Wieland abandoned this convention and sought out another. In the *Oberon*[1] (1780), which is the best of his poetical works, we have the romantic inspiration in full swing. His sources are, no longer Plato or Xenophon, but, Shakespeare and the tales of mediæval chivalry. The *Oberon*, like all that Wieland wrote, suffers from prolixity; yet it may still be read, in parts at all events, with pleasure; and it is instructive to recall how, at the time of its appearance, classicism in France had not yet desisted from those spasmodic struggles which were the sure precursors of its collapse.

In some important branches of prose literature in which Germany was afterwards to excel, the period under review was comparatively barren. History is represented by Johann Lorenz Mosheim (1694-1755), though his famous *Ecclesiastical History* is written in Latin; and by Justus Möser (1720-94), whose *Osnabrückische Geschichte* (1768-80) is as deeply permeated by a wholesome distrust of government on "philosophical" principles as are his *Patriotische Phantasien* (1774), a collection of fugitive journalism. In philosophy, original speculation had given way to the simpler, and perhaps more profitable, occupation of

[1] Translated into English by William Sotheby, 2 vols., 1798.

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popularising the ideas of other men. Christian Wolff (1679-1745) rendered this questionable service to Leibnitz; and others were found ready to do the same by the English deists, who, long after their views had been exploded in their own country, found an appreciative audience in Germany. The ultimate identification of German rationalism, or "Illuminism," with a political propaganda, and its close association with the jargon and tom-foolery which were the stock-in-trade of Hermann Dousterswivel, form one of the most curious episodes in the annals of human thought. Meanwhile, before it attained that phase of development, it numbered among its champions Christian Garve (1742-98), Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), and Christoph Friedrich Nicolai (1733-1811), a bookseller and a thorough-paced Philistine, whose *Sebaldus Nothanker* (1773-76) is an early specimen of the latitudinarian "novel with a purpose." The high-water mark of rationalism, however, is reached in the *Fragmente eines Wolfenbütteles Ungenannten* (1774-78), an alleged posthumous work of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), to which Lessing stood godfather, and to which it is impossible to help suspecting that his relation was even more intimate. We do Lessing no injustice in supposing that, like Diderot, he occasionally permitted others to reap the glory which should have rewarded his own labours.

"*Illuminism.*"

With Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81) we reach incomparably the greatest German, but one, of his generation. From his entry at the university of

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Leipzig in the 'forties, his personality becomes an ever growing power in German literature, and it was reserved for him to terminate once for all the controversy between so-called classicism and the opposing school. Alike in criticism and in creation he towered above the heads of his contemporaries; but he is so much part and parcel of the Romantic movement in its widest sense, he is so inextricably bound up with the Romantic theory and the Romantic practice of art, that the full discussion of his place in European letters has been reserved for the volume next in order in this series.

Frederick the Great.

As for the very greatest German of his time, it cannot be pretended that he was aught but out of sympathy with the national tendency in German literature. During the whole course of his long and glorious reign (1740-86), it was French poets, French philosophers, and French men of science upon whom Frederick the Great lavished encouragement in the shape of applause and pensions; it was the French type of culture and civilisation which he desired to see predominant among his subjects; and it was the French tongue which he conceived to be the only tolerable medium of literary expression, and in which he wrote his *De la Littérature Allemande* (1780). But to dwell on his distaste for his native language and literature is ungracious and unjust. It is easy for princes to encourage letters and the fine arts at the cost of a little condescension and a little money. It is much less easy for them to restore to a distracted people the consciousness of national unity and national life. By

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so doing, Frederick laid a solid and enduring foundation for that national literature which otherwise might have proved to be bottomed upon the shifting sand. The Seven Years' War gave poets something really worth singing about, as the *Preussische Kriegslieder von einem Grenadier* (1757-58) testify; and, what a critic has happily described as the transformation of Johann Wilhelm Gleim (1719-1803), the chief of the Halle school of poets, from an Anacreon into a Tyrtæus, is but one result of the almost unparalleled work which this most extraordinary of monarchs performed for his own kingdom and for the whole of Germany.

Holland.

No such spirit as emanated from the exploits of the Prussian king could in the nature of things animate the Dutch. During the eighteenth century Holland[1] was delivered over to French influence, which had derived an incalculable accession of strength from the exodus of French Protestants consequent upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The chief trace of English influence, which it might have been reasonably supposed would be equally powerful, is discovered in the *Hollandsche Spectator* of Justus van Effen (1684-1735), which has already been adverted to in the preceding volume. For the rest, French classicism, with a dash of Milton, is dominant everywhere. Arnold Hoogvliet (1687-

[1] Jonckbloet, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, 4th ed., by Honigh, 6 vols., Groningen: 1890; Penon, *Nederlandsche Dichten Prozawerken*, 6 vols., 1888; Ten Brink, *Kleine Geschiedenis der Nederlandschen Letteren*, Haarlem: 1877; Van Vloten, *Schets van de Geschiedenis der Nederlandschen Letteren*, 1879; Schneider, *Geschichte der Niederlandischen Litteratur*, Leipzig: 1888.

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1763) indulges in Biblical epic; Sybrand Feitama (1694-1758) translates the *Henriade*. The brothers van Haren had perhaps more vigour and force of character than these. But they were friends of Voltaire; and while the historical epic was the favourite of Willem (1710-68), the composition of classical tragedies on the well-established models was what chiefly occupied Onno (1713-79). Dirk Smits (1702-1752) was an elegiac poet of some merit; but the literary nerve and vigour of the country were debilitated by the general establishment of those clubs for the cultivation and practice of poetry which are so common a feature in the social economy of Europe during our period.

Scandinavia.

Danish-Norwegian literature.

The great conflict in the Danish literature[1] of this era is that between the national and the German tendency; and the writers who ultimately secured a victory for the former were of the same type as Holberg, who has been fully discussed in treating of the preceding period: that is to say, they were Norwegians who wrote in the Danish language, and lived, or at all events published, in Copenhagen. Klopstock resided in that capital for some time about the middle of the century; yet even that trumpet-tongued herald of a distinctively

[1] P. Hansen, *Illustreret dansk Literaturhistorie*, 1895; F. Winkel Horn, *Den Danske Literaturs Historie*, 1879, &c.; Gosse, *Northern Studies*, 1879; Schweitzer, *Geshichte der Skandinavischen Litteratur*, 3 vols., Leipzig: 1886-90.

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German literature could not hold his own against Christian Braumann Tullin (1728-65), a lyrical poet of great excellence and some originality, whose masters were Pope, Thomson, and Young. But even Tullin yields in importance to Johannes Ewald[1] (1743-81), a dramatist as well as a lyrical poet of the very highest class, who furnished Denmark with her national anthem; and also to J. H. Wessel (1742-85), who killed the French classical drama in Denmark by a single happy stroke of ridicule. His *Love Without Stockings* (1772), a burlesque of the tragedies under which the Danish stage then groaned, is, as Mr Gosse has remarked, not unworthy to be ranked with the *Rehearsal* and the *Critic*.

Ewald and Wessel.

The more prominent Swedish writers[2] who come into our period—such as Triewald, Dalin, Fru Nordenflycht, Gyllenborg, and Creutz—have been already discussed by Mr Elton, who points out that their importance consists less in their positive merits than in the fact that, taken collectively, they mark a break with the Swedish literature of the past, and are the starting-point of the Swedish literature of the future. The last quarter of the century witnessed a renewal of activity among men of letters under the auspices first of Gustavus III., and then of Gustavus IV. But, within our proper

Swedish literature.

[1] *Samtlige Skrifter*, 4 vols., Kjöbenhavn: 1787-1814.

[2] Schück, *Svensk Literatur-historia*, Stockholm: 1886, *et seq.*; P. Atterbom, *Svenska Sjare och Skalder*, 2 vols., Upsala: 1841; P. Hanselli, *Samlade Vitterhetsarbeten af svenska Författare*, Upsala; 1871, &c.

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limits, there is little of real moment besides the works of the authors enumerated above. *Adalrik och Göthilda*, the didactic romance of Mörk (1714-1763), need detain us no longer than *Susanna*, a classical tragedy by Wallenberg (1746-78). It is rather in her men of science that the glory of Sweden in the mid-eighteenth century lies: in men like Celsius (1701-44), or Bergmann (1735-84), or, most illustrious of all, Carl von Linné (1707-78), better known as Linnæus, the founder of modern botany. These all communicated their discoveries to the world through the medium of the Latin tongue, and in so far as they did so have something of the air of survivals from the titanic age in the world of learning. The same language was employed by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a man of immense intellectual capacity, who, half-way through his career, unluckily abandoned the study of what is intelligible, and developed a mystical system of religion which, whatever it may mean for the adept, is for the uninitiated so much gibberish. Swedenborg has exercised practically no influence on the higher thought of Europe, but his talk about "affinities" supplied the half-educated classes for several years after his death with a useful and attractive catchword. He is a typical instance of the lamentable case of those who are fain to permit a constitutional predilection for mysticism to engulf them in the depths of the incomprehensible.

Linnæus;

and Swedenborg.

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Italy and the Peninsula.

With the exception of France and England, no European country has a better right than Italy[1] to be proud of its literature in the mid-eighteenth century. In philosophy, in jurisprudence, in history, and in archæology she can point to writers of a high order; while, if the new art of prose fiction scarcely invaded her borders, her stage equipped itself with what for the rest of Europe was already an old, but for her was a new, convention. The speculations of the *philosophe* school could not, indeed, fail to make their influence felt, nor did she wholly escape the trammels of classicism. But there was enough spontaneous energy to assert itself against the overwhelming predominance of any foreign school of thought or taste; and the literary record of the country is a remarkable one up to the date at which the inevitable consequences of the French Revolution plunged the whole political and social life of the people into the melting-pot.

Italy.

The work of Vico we have already discussed. His contemporary, Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1745), has deservedly earned renown by his *Antiquitates Italicæ medii ævi* (1738-42), his *Annali d'Italia* (1744-49), and other works conspicu-

Scholars and Jurists.

[1] Consult D'Ancona and Bacci, *Manuale della Letteratura Italiana*, 5 vols., 1893-95; the *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* of Emiliani Guidici, 2 vols., 1855; of Francesco de Sanctis, 2 vols., 1879; of Adolfo Bartoli, 1879. See also Mr Snell's *Primer* and Dr Garnett's *Short History* of Italian literature (1893 and 1898 respectively). *Classici Italiani*, 374 vols., Milan: 1804-1850.

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ous for their profound learning and laborious research. His earlier essay in criticism, the *Della perfetta poesia* (1706), has been dealt with in the preceding volume of this series. Pietro Giannone (1676-1748) brought himself into trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities by means of his *Istoria civile del regno di Napoli* (1723), which was translated into English a few years later; but on the whole the attitude of the Church was not actively intolerant. If the policy of the Popes was not enlightened, it was easy-going, and this is particularly true of Benedict XIV. In "social science" Cesare Beccaria (1738-94) won a European reputation by his treatise *Dei Delitti e della Pene* (1764); in political economy Galiani, as we have seen (*supra*, p. 287), could hold his own with the most accomplished of the French specialists; in political philosophy Jactano Filangieri (1752-87) became almost equally celebrated on the strength of his *Scienzia della Legislazione* (1783). In jurisprudence there is no more respectable name than that of Giovanni Vicenzo Gravina[1] (1664-1718), who is also celebrated as the patron of Metastasio; while in the department of literary history none have better claims to remembrance than Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni (1663-1728), by reason of his *L'istoria della volgar Poesia* (1731), Francisco Xavier Quadrio (1695-1756), by reason of his *Della Storia e della ragione d'ogni Poesia* (1736-39), and Girolamo Tiraboschi (1731-94), by reason of his *Storia della letteratura Italiana* (1774-82).

The mention of Gravina and Crescimbeni brings us

[1] See *The Augustan Ages* in this series, p. 401.

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at once to the Academy of Arcadians,[1] one of the most remarkable institutions of its kind, in the founding of which (1690) they played a prominent part. The Arcadia probably achieved its unparalleled success as much on account of its follies as on account of its disinterested ambition to purify poetical taste or to amend poetical practice. But its hold over the whole of Italy testifies to the interest taken in literary matters, from which no open political arena offered any distraction; and it did much, as "Vernon Lee" has pointed out, to obliterate local prejudices, as well as to enable any promising youth with a turn for rhyme to find congenial society and a sympathetic hearing. Thus Italy became transformed into a breeding-ground for minor poets, who masqueraded as "shepherds," and poured forth verses upon the most trivial themes. Such a state of matters was bound to work out its own destruction. Giuseppe Baretti (1719-86), a literary iconoclast who revelled in demolishing the idol of the hour, delivered a violent attack upon the Arcadia in *La Frusta Letteraria* (1763), a periodical of which he was the conductor, and of which the very name indicates his Bludyer-like propensities. From this assault the Arcadian Academy never completely recovered, and, amid the political convulsions with which the century closed, it practically passed away, leaving behind it a memory which

Arcadia.

[1] The best account in English of the Arcadia will be found in "Vernon Lee's" *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, 1880. The most recent Italian authority is Carini, *L'Arcadia dal* 1690 *al* 1890; Rome: 1891 *et seq.*

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it has since been customary to treat with no very great respect.

To discuss the Arcadian songsters in detail were superfluous, and, in truth, with the exception of Giovanni Meli (1740-1815), a Sicilian who wrote in the dialect of his island, there is really only one poet of the period (Metasatsio apart) whose merits entitle him to serious consideration. Giuseppe Parini (1729-99), a priest belonging to Milan, was the author of a poem entitled *Il Giorno*, the first part of which, *Il Mattino*, appeared in 1763, to be followed in due course by three other instalments applicable to as many divisions of the twenty-four hours. The subject of his poem is the aimless and futile life of the average young Italian nobleman of the period. Its purpose is didactic, and is attained, not by outbursts of invective, but, by a gift of delicate satire which has seldom been surpassed. The influence of English poets such as Pope, Young, and Thomson, has been detected in Parini's masterpiece; and, whether he was indebted to one or all of these in any notable degree or not, certain it is that his poem, which is written in blank verse, is a triumph of art in its own line. Gentle social satire in prose of the *Spectator* type was no more wanting in Italy than in other European countries, its chief organs being the *Osservatore* and the *Gazetta Veneta* of Gaspare Gozzi (1715-1786), the elder brother of a greater than himself; but the *Giorno* stands on a much higher level than even good journalism.

Parini.

At the opening of our period Count Scipione

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Maffei (1675-1755) had made a bold attempt, with his *Merope* (1713), to turn the main stream of his countrymen's dramatic talent, then running extremely low, into the channel of classical tragedy; and that *Merope* has won the commendation of subsequent critics, besides making a considerable noise in Europe in its own day, is undeniable.[1] But, fortunately, a very different species of dramatic composition came to the front, and superseded a *genre* which is always apt to chill the literary life-blood of a nation. Opera is a form of play which an Englishman is slow to treat seriously as literature; and Italian opera, as established in London during the reign of Anne, was a constant mark for the ridicule of the wits. But, though the conventions of drama sung are manifestly more obtrusive and less subtle than those of drama spoken, the conventions peculiar to the latter are at bottom equally artificial; and, if allowances must be made for the necessary limitations of the one form of art, there is no logical reason why allowances should not be made for the necessary limitations of the other. To condemn opera as *suâ naturâ* illegitimate is puerile; and, though the works of Metastasio have now lost much of their savour, it would be absurd not to acknowledge their sûperiority in dramatic power and knowledge of the stage to most of the English and

Opera,

[1] We do not reach Italian tragedy proper until the appearance on the scene of Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803), the consideration of whose work is more properly deferred till the following volume. The tragedies of Chiari are of importance merely as supplying material for Carlo Gozzi's satire.

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much of the French classical tragedy contemporaneous with them. The first writer to associate opera with literature was Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750), a Venetian, who, besides his contributions to the theatre, conducted the *Giornale de' Letterati* with considerable success. But he had the good sense to recognise his superior in Pietro Bonaventura Trapassi[1] (1698-1782), more commonly known as Metastasio, who, after beginning life by improvising as a mere boy in the streets of Rome, and thereafter narrowly escaping the uncongenial fate of being bred a lawyer, finally became the most conspicuous figure in Italian literature during the second quarter of the century. His first great success was the *Didone Abbandonata* (1724), his last the *Attilio Regolo*, written in 1740, but not performed until ten years later. Between these two, his production was at the rate of about one opera a year, and the products vary considerably in merit. *La Clemenza di Tito* (1734), for example, it is not easy to treat with gravity. The reader knows not whether to wonder more at the persistency with which Titus enunciates the twaddling maxims supposed to be appropriate to a benevolent ruler, or the superb nimbleness with which, in obedience to a stern sense of duty, he flits from *fiancée* to *fiancée*, perching finally upon the rock of deliberate celibacy. But even in the *Clemenza* there are traces of the qualities which are the glory of the *Artaserse*

and Metastasio.

[1] *Opere*, 17 vols.; Padua: 1811-12. His dramas and other poems were translated into English by Hoole (3 vols., 1800), whose introduction contains a useful chronological list of his operas and cantatas.

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(1730), the *Olimpiade* (1733), and the *Achille in Sciro* (1736): the gift of contriving a poignant situation, and of bringing about the clash of strong emotions, by the employment of apparently simple means. Metastasio displays considerable ingenuity in the weaving of a plot, and has plenty of the dramatic instinct. Where he fails is in the excessive use of sentiment, and in exaggerated appeals to Quixotic notions of generosity, such as the classical tragedy of his age is thoroughly familiar with. Yet occasionally he attains to heights of true, and not overstrained, nobility. The closing scene of the *Regolo*, for example, has a dignity and power which show of what Metastasio was really capable.

Comedy,

Italian comedy at the close of the seventeenth century was in a parlous state. Certain stereotyped characters, such as Harlequin, Pantaloon, and the Doctor, appeared in every piece, and the best actor was he who could gag most successfully. What Gottsched did for the comic stage of Germany by ridding it of "Hanswurst" was performed for the Italian *commedia dell' arte* by Carlo Goldoni[1] (1707-93), whom we have already had occasion to mention. When he had once discovered his true *métier*, Goldoni became an extremely prolific writer. It is therefore not surprising that his facility and ease are more remarkable than the depth of his psychology or the brilliance of his dialogue. But what he lacked in respect of the latter qualities he made up for in good-humour and in fertility of comic invention. To suggest a comparison between him and Molière—to place his *Vero Amico*,

and Goldoni.

[1] *Delle commedie*, 17 vols., Venice: 1761.

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or his *Botteger de Caffé*, or his *Locandiera* side by side with *L'Avare*, or *Tartuffe*, or *Le Misanthrope*—is to do him a palpable injustice. Yet the pupil has a thousand amiable characteristics, which keep his reputation still fresh and sweet. It has, indeed, been denied that Goldoni was Molière's debtor to any serious extent; and it is true that the alteration which he made on Italian comedy was effected not by a single bold stroke so much as by many tentative efforts. But it seems to be carrying enthusiasm for native Italian literature too far to suppose that without Molière for his model Goldoni would have accomplished what he did. It was with no heartfelt pang that he quitted his native Venice in 1762 for Paris, where he spent the remaining third of his life; nor can anything more forcibly illustrate the impression made by the France of Voltaire and Diderot upon the imagination of contemporary Europe, than the contrast between the equanimity with which Goldoni deserted, and the despair with which Galiani resought, their common country.

Gozzi and the revival of the old comedy.

One of the active causes in bringing about Goldoni's self-imposed exile was the extraordinary recrudescence of the *commedia dell' arte* under Carlo Gozzi[1] (1722-1806). Gozzi was a strong literary conservative, who bitterly resented the popularity of the foreign conventions imported into the drama by his fellow-Venetian. After some preliminary skirmishing, he resolved to construct a play on the old lines which should be equally successful

[1] *Opere*, 10 vols., Venice: 1772-91; *Memorie Inutili*, 3 vols., Venice: 1797. There is an English translation of his memoirs, with an introduction, by J. A. Symonds, 2 vols., 1890.

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with Goldoni's comedies. The result was the celebrated *Amore delle Tre Melarancie* (1761). It had a great success, and proved to be the precursor of nine other *fiabe*, or dramatised fairy tales, *L'Augellino Belverde* being, perhaps, the most noteworthy, which for a few years practically extinguished the new comedy of manners. Some critics have seen in Gozzi a precursor of the romantic movement,—the inventor "out of his own head," so to speak, of a new form of drama which soared above the events of everyday life. But Mr Symonds appears to have demolished this theory by reminding us that Gozzi's primary purpose was to get the better of Goldoni, not to work out a new and original vein of his own, and that the elastic texture of the *fiaba* offered the best possible opportunity for satirising his rival. In his strong convictions, his intense conservatism, and his gift of humour, Gozzi resembles Aristophanes; but we miss in him the ring of true lyrical poetry, and that finishing touch of genius which enabled the Athenian to make of his work a coherent and highly organised form of art. His day of success was brief; and it is long since Goldoni was restored to the place in the estimation of his countrymen from which he was ousted in so curious a manner.

In the Peninsula the influence of France was practically omnipotent during our period. In Portugal[1]

[1] Theophilo Braga, *Manual da Historia da Litteratura Portugueza*, 1875; *Antologia Portugueza*, 1876; *Historia da Litteratura Portugueza*, 14 vols., 1870-80; Friedrich Bouterwek, *History of Spanish and Portuguese Literature*, tr. by Thomasina Ross, 2 vols., 1823.

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the adjective requires no qualification. An Academy was founded under the presidency of Francis Xavier de Menezes (1673-1743), who interpreted the theories of Boileau and other French classical writers to his countrymen. The Arcadia de Lisbõa was founded upon the Italian model in 1765; but, like other institutions of the sort, it naturally did little practical good in stimulating poetical genius. When we have enumerated Domingos dos Reis Quita (1728-70), a pastoral poet; Antonio Diniz da Cruz e Silva (1731-1800), also a poet; and Nicolau Tolentino da Almeida (1741-1811), a satirist; we have really exhausted the creative talent of the age. Such literary strength as remained in the nation was expended upon works of learning and research like the valuable *Bibliotheca Lusitana* (1741) of Diogo Barbosa Machado (1682-1772), or the historical writings of Damião Antonio de Lemos (1715-89). It was not until the arrival of Francisco Manuel de Nascimento (1734-1819) that Portuguese literature began to revive.

Portugal.

Nor was it much otherwise with Spain,[1] where the classical movement, with all its limitations, was a most salutary corrective of backslidings on the right and defections on the left—to Gongorism on the one hand, and to metaphysical conceits

Spain.

[1] Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature*, 4th ed., 3 vols., Boston: 1872; Marqués de Valmar, *Bosquejo histórico-crítico de la Poesía Castellana en Siglo xviii.*, Madrid: 1893; Rivadeneyra, *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, 79 vols., Madrid: v.d.; Clarke, *History of Spanish Literature*, 1893; Kelly, *History of Spanish Literature*, 1898. Consult also Cotarelo y Mori, *Iriarte y su Época* (1897).

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on the other. The great champion of French classicism was Ignacio de Luzan (1702-54), who, besides making a prose translation of portions of *Paradise Lost*, and adapting La Chaussée's *Préjugé à la Mode* to the Spanish stage, wrote a *Póetica* in 1737, in which his literary creed was explicitly set forth.[1] Among his supporters in theory or in practice were Hervás (*d.* 1742), who wrote under the name of Jorge Pitillas; Feyjóo (1675-1764), who produced the *Teatro crítico* (1726-29) and *Cartas eruditas y curiosas* (1742-60); Martin Sarmiento (1695-1772); Nasarre (1689-1751); Montiano (1697-1765), whose classical tragedies won the approbation of Lessing; Velasquez de Velasco (1722-72), the author of *Orígenes de la Poesía castellana* (1749); Fernández de Moratín (1737-80), who survives by reason of his *Fiesta de Toros en Madrid;* and José de Cadalso y Vázquez (1741-82), who made it his business impartially to imitate foreign writers of various nationalities. The dominant note of all this school of authors and critics was contempt for Calderon, Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and, in short, all the men whose works are the chief glory of Spanish literature. The French bias, it should be noted, had been assisted by the final settlement of the Spanish crown on a Bourbon, whose undisputed reign lasted from 1714 to 1746. The Real Academia Española was founded in the former year, and, though it was not delivered of an authoritative grammar until 1771, its *Diccionario de Autoridades*, an admirable work in many respects, appeared between 1726 and 1739. The classical move-

[1] See *The Augustan Ages* in this series, p. 409.

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ment cannot be said to have crushed out original genius, for there was little original genius to be exposed to that operation. Spain, like Italy, was a "nest of singing birds" of the minor order. So far from silencing the melody of any one worth listening to, the French influence was powerful for good in castigating extravagance of thought and language, and purifying literary taste.

French influence supreme.

Among the authors who deserve specific mention are Vincente Antonio García de la Huerta[1] (1734-87), who is remembered for his *Raquel*, a tragedy, in the French style, and for a translation of Voltaire's *Zaïre;* Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811), a statesman and political economist, who enriched the stage with the *Delincuente Honrado* (1773), a comedy after the manner of Diderot's *Fils naturel;* and the two fabulists, Félix María de Samaniego (1745-1801), and Tomás de Iriarte[2] (1750-91), who also achieved some celebrity in his time as a writer of comedy.

But the two most conspicuous figures in the Spanish literature of the mid-eighteenth century are unquestionably José Francisco de Isla (1703-81) and Ramon de la Cruz y Cano (1731 ?-95). The former was a Jesuit who scored his first literary success with a satirical account of what took place at the proclamation of Ferdinand VI. at Pamplona in Navarre in 1746. *Triumfo del Amor y de la Lealtad* was the name of this piece, which obtained the com-

Isla and Fray Gerundio.

[1] *Obras poeticas*, 2nd ed., Madrid: 1786.

[2] *Coleccion de obras en verso y prosa*, 6 vols., Madrid: 1787.

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pliment that of all others is most dear to the professor of irony, that, namely, of being taken seriously. But the *Triumfo* was cast into the shade by the first part of his *Historia del famoso Predicador Fray Gerundio de Campazas, alias Zotes*[1] (1758), a quasi-picaresque romance of which the primary purpose is an attack upon the then popular style of preaching, but which contrives to lend many a shrewd knock to preaching friars generally. It is scarcely surprising that zealous Churchmen should have been offended by the sallies of so daring an author, and the book was condemned by the Inquisition in 1760. Its chief interest lies, not in the ecclesiastical or critical questions which it raises, and which are often discussed at intolerable length, but, in the delineation of the peasantry, and in the insight it affords into the manners and modes of thought of the Spanish people. Isla, who with the rest of his order was expelled from Spain by Charles III. in 1765, wound up a busy literary career by translating *Gil Blas;* or, as he prefers to put it, by restoring that work, which had been originally "stolen" from the Spanish, to its native tongue. The translation appeared in 1787, and a controversy of the usual type has from time to time raged round the theory thus propounded on its title-page. But the consensus of competent opinion is strongly against the view of Le Sage's masterpiece which Isla championed, and

[1] A second part appeared in 1770, and there is an edition of the whole in 2 vols., 1770-87. Thomas Nugent translated the work into English, 2 vols., 1772, retrenching here and there, and his version is a far from despicable piece of work.

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which, however plausible on the surface, will scarcely bear serious examination.

Ramon de la Cruz and his Sainetes.

The dramatic works of Ramon de la Cruz are said to embrace about 300 pieces. Only about a third, however, of this mass is of real consequence, and that third consists wholly of *sainetes*,[1] or short farces. La Cruz drew his characters from the ordinary everyday life of Madrid; he handled them with a broad and unflagging humour which delighted the public; and, if he did not make his fortune, he at all events won plenty of applause. His form of art is, with the exception of *Fray Gerundio*, the only spontaneous and distinctly national production of the Spanish literature of that age. As such it received a hearty welcome; as such it deserves to escape oblivion.

Postscript.

General characteristics.

We have now, in conclusion, briefly to inquire what are the main general characteristics of thought and tone, on the one hand, and of form and expression, on the other, that distinguish the period with the consideration of which we have been occupied. The writer who attempts such a summary of results will do well to walk warily and with circumspection. It is much easier to lay down sweeping propositions than to be certified of their soundness, and the light-heartedness with which critics have been accustomed to dogmatise about all ages—and not

[1] *Coleccion de Sainetes*, 2 vols., Madrid: 1843.

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least about the eighteenth century—though in some respects a highly enviable gift, is no guarantee of trustworthiness or accuracy. The pronouncements of criticism are obnoxious to suspicion in exact proportion to the extent of their application; and it is not difficult to lay an apparently secure foundation for erroneous and misleading conclusions by means of a copious citation of isolated passages from the most authoritative sources. The inferences which we shall venture to draw from the preceding pages are, accordingly, presented with all due diffidence; and the reader is desired, when he meets with any statement which seems to him to reach farther in scope than it should, to supply that qualifying element of which generalisations, upon no matter what topic, almost invariably stand in need.

Acquiescence in the order of things.

The predominant note, then, in practically all the writers of our period is acquiescence in the order of the universe as it is actually constituted and as it actually exists. The feeling springs from a different source in different cases, and is naturally stronger in some than it is in others. There, however, it is, latent or patent, implicit or explicit.

The "Siècle des lumières" theory.

With one, and that the larger, though not the more important, school of thinkers, the sentiment arose out of the sincere and unquestioning belief that their lot had been cast in an era of unparalleled enlightenment; that theirs was the last word in the progressive series of human thought and

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knowledge; and that, in fine, upon them the ends of the earth were truly come. This opinion was not the outcome of any phase of "enthusiasm," or of any desire to pose or strike an attitude. It was accepted as expressing a plain and obvious matter of fact, which it was worth no one's while to verify because it was worth no one's while to dispute it. The necessary corollary of this pleasing article of belief was, as we have seen, that previous ages had been barbarous, ignorant, and foolish, and that their history was uninteresting and unimportant, except by way of solemn warning. Any remission from this sentence of indiscriminate condemnation that might be made in favour of the Grèeks and Romans, was more than compensated by the Rhadamanthine sternness with which the Middle Ages were treated. The connotation of the epithet "mediæval" is still unflattering, and it was in the eighteenth century that the tract of time whence it is derived acquired the name which clings to it with the general for want of intelligence, ability, and common-sense.

Voltaire, Diderot, and the rest of the Encyclopædic school in France, were all firm believers in this "siècle des lumières" theory. It is quite true that Voltaire gave the *coup de grâce* to deistical optimism, and we have seen how he wavered between belief and disbelief in a benevolent Providence. But, in his heart of hearts, Voltaire was no true pessimist. The world upon the whole had used him well, and he had no serious quarrel with it. What provoked him, and what mainly provoked Diderot

Optimism of the "philosophes"

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(for it would be rash to affirm that Diderot was unaffected by a very different sort of influence), was, not the spectacle of a whole universe in which things have a way of going mysteriously and lamentably wrong, but, the spectacle of an era of progress and enlightenment in which the blundering and criminal imbecility of a handful of fanatics and bigots prevented some things from going right. If the bigots and the fanatics could once be swept out of the way, nothing would remain to prevent mankind from reaping the full benefit of existing in a century in which science had achieved so much that was permanent and final. The times were certainly out of joint, but they could be set right with very little effort. Let Christianity and all manner of obscurantism be thoroughly suppressed, and all would be well. People would cease to suffer persecution for their religious views; philosophers would have the ear of the powers that be; but thieves and other malefactors would continue to be punished with the utmost rigour of the law; and private property would enjoy even more vigilant protection and even greater security than it had in the past.

and of the Economists.

The Economists arrived at the same result, though perhaps by a somewhat different route. Their complaint was, not so much against the bigots personally, as against an economic system which had been handed down from time immemorial, and remained in full force, though wholly unsuited to the altered circumstances of the nation. Let the artificial restrictions imposed upon trade be removed;

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let the free circulation of every commodity be permitted both within and without the territory of France; and you shall see what you shall see, to wit, a hard-working, prosperous, and contented people. Apply the great panacea of "laissez-faire," and human welfare and felicity are assured. With this view Hume and Adam Smith, to say nothing of lesser lights on this side of the Channel, were in substantial accord; and, if Hume was ever disposed to question the expediency of the order of things mundane as he knew it, it was only when he made the mortifying discovery that the fashionable world of London firmly declined to take Scotch philosophers at their own valuation.

In the greater writers, this sense of what we may call corporate self-satisfaction — this deeply-rooted conviction that civilised man in the eighteenth century was the darling of fortune—is rarely so expressed as to seem offensive or arrogant. At the worst, it is an amiable foible. At the best, it inspires those who have it to make the most of their privileges. The great men have no qualms of uncertainty about their position as the heirs of all the ages. They are aware of their true rank in the scale of being, and know that while it would be affectation on their part to ignore, it would be bad manners to obtrude, it. They take it for granted, and expect every one else to do the same. They see no necessity for making a fuss over their indubitably high station, after the manner of a certain section of British philosophers in the succeeding century. In the inferior writers, as might have been

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expected, the consciousness of the destiny thus reserved for them receives more blatant utterance. Comparatively few are the authors who are exempt from all participation in the feeling. Horace Walpole and Chesterfield shared the blest immunity of a class which is wise enough to care for none of these things. Butler was free from it, though for controversial purposes he was apt to write as though he considered reason to be the peculiar prerogative of his age. Berkeley had not a vestige of it, even in seeming.

Submission to the inevitable.

There is, however, an important school of writers and thinkers, including many of the greatest novelists, in whom the mood of acquiescence in the existing is the result of the intelligible view that the existing is merely the inevitable. Of this class the best representative is probably Johnson, who had a very keen sense indeed of the additions which science had made to the comfort and convenience of men, and who had no notion of quitting Fleet Street for the jungle, or exchanging veal-pies with prunes in them for the more primitive and less sophisticated dietary of the Hottentot. We have already (*supra*, p. 104 *et seq.*) endeavoured to explain Johnson's view of life, and it is superfluous here to do much more than refer to the closing passage with which Goldsmith's *Traveller* was furnished by his pen.

> "How small of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which kings or laws can cause or cure!"

These lines, with which the passage opens, express a sentiment deeply implanted in Johnson's breast.

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No man was more sensible than he of the evils and miseries of human life; no man had opposed a stouter front to their impact; and no man was readier to do what he could to mitigate their severity for others. But he had no belief in those magical strokes of policy which are to transform the earth from a wilderness into a garden, and to make its inhabitants supremely good and supremely happy. He saw that the sphere within which human activity could accomplish anything was strictly limited, and that man was powerless to remove the limitations imposed upon it. Hence it came that human wishes and aspirations were futile. The qualities inherent in his constitution were the chief source of man's woes; and those qualities were incapable of eradication by enlightenment or any other process. If the world could start with a clean slate to-day, the writing on it would be as confused and unintelligible as ever to-morrow. Thus Voltaire and Johnson reached the same conclusion from contradictory premises. The one was prepared to acquiesce in the world of fact because very little was required to make it what it ought to be. The other was equally acquiescent because the most strenuous effort could make it little better than it was.

Attitude of the Novelists to Life.

The concurrence of the novelists in the Johnsonian view is, naturally, hinted rather than expressly declared. Of Defoe we may say that he neither acquiesced nor rebelled, his goods being for the most part made to sell, and not to adumbrate a philosophy of life. In Marivaux, we are aware of the first movings of the spirit, which,

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when fully developed, will decline to accept the universe as it stands, and will rather smash all the glass and crockery than put up with it any longer. But neither Marivaux nor Richardson, and still less Prévost, is an advocate of "crying for the moon." Each understands that there is a boundary which the wise man will not attempt to transgress, because the way of such transgressors is hard. The sensibility of Sterne—like all sensibility in the technical sense of the term—is the negation of the philosophy of the housemaid in *Rasselas*, who, after breaking a tea-cup, judiciously consoled herself with the reflection that that which cannot be repaired is not to be regretted. But it is too much of a pose to be taken as a serious protest against the dispensation under which the human race has always lived. As for Le Sage and Fielding, they afford typical illustrations of the attitude of the sane and healthy man to existence. Their acquiescence in the order of things does not proceed in the least from religious motives. Theirs was not a devotional age, nor were they of a devotional temperament. No more does it proceed from the "age of enlightenment" feeling, which they had far too keen a sense of the ludicrous to entertain for a single moment. But they see things as they are; they have the graces of humour and irony which more than all others purge the observer's vision; and they had rather enjoy the spectacle of life, such as it is, than put on sackcloth and cover their heads with ashes—which will add no zest to the game, and do none of the players one halfpennyworth of good. They are kindly

Their sanity.

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and sagacious; full of good counsel for such as have ears to hear; as little likely as Shakespeare, or Scott, or Sophocles, to turn the heads of those on whose shoulders these heads are something gingerly poised. The same thing may be said of French comedy, even of the tearful variety. And in a minor degree it is also true of the Essayists,—the *Adventurers*, the *Connoisseurs*, and the rest. No one can learn from their pages that he is a law unto himself. The lessons they inculcate are those of mature good sense. There is no encouragement for the wilful attempt of the individual to overstep the inexorable decrees which are the very conditions of his being.

Pseudo-Stoicism.

That there existed a counter-tendency opposed to this mood of acquiescence is undeniable. From time to time its peevish utterance makes itself audible. There are echoes of it in Thomson. There are more than echoes of it in *Die Alpen*. Voltaire made a brisk and effective attack upon it in his *Mondain*. The classical aspiration for a return of the reign of Saturn was duly reproduced as one of the orthodox embellishments of poetry. The evils of luxury were deplored; the effeminacy and self-indulgence of the age were rebuked; the simple joys of the bucolic swain's existence were extolled and held up to admiration. The oppression of tyrants and the corruption of politicians were punctually inveighed against in rhymed couplets more or less stinging and epigrammatic. But all these expressions of dissatisfaction and discontent are hollow, insincere, and conventional — a mere item in the literary purveyor's stock-in-trade. No one supposed that anything would

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ever come of them. But the moment you reach Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or "the Friend of Man," the difference is unmistakable. Here, you are conscious at once, are persons who "mean business," if they mean anything; who are resolved that their indictment of human society shall go to the jury; whose gloom and anger are something more than parts of a well-established literary convention; and whose declamation is designed, not to gratify the taste of *les honnêtes gens*, but, to arouse the passions of all whom it may concern. Rousseau's train of reasoning may, as we have endeavoured to show (*supra*, p. 71 *et seq.*), be torn to tatters. His immaculate child of nature, who produces institutions hopelessly and irredeemably corrupt, will stand the test neither of historical nor of logical investigation. But men are not governed by considerations of history or logic; and Rousseau's appearance in the arena of letters was the signal for the letting loose of much purposeless, yet insistent, groaning, and of much importunate clamouring for the unattainable. For a resolute, but neither sullen nor unmanly, submission to what is and must be, he substituted a feverish restlessness, a gnawing disquietude, which lasted until it, in turn, gave place once more to the mood of acquiescence, now fortified and sustained by the invigorating principle of Romance.[1]

Earnestness of J.-J. Rousseau.

[1] It will not be forgotten that Scott, who had in him all that was best in the habit of mind of the eighteenth century, derived more pleasure from reading *London* and the *Vanity of Human Wishes* than any other poetical composition he could mention.

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But if human activity was felt to be hampered by barriers which could neither be evaded nor forced, the space reserved for its free and legitimate exercise was, not the less, but, rather, the more interesting. The proper study of mankind was man: man in his daily round and common task; man in his hours of gaiety and mirth, and in his hours of misery and despair; man in his weakness and his strength, in his vice and in his virtue; but man, at all costs, in his habit as he lives. Tragedy clung for a while to the traditional representation of a portion of the species in which ordinary persons must needs have failed to descry much in common with themselves; yet even tragedy had to relax her forbidding austerity, and to borrow a hint or two from her despised and undignified relative, melodrama. Comedy, too, descended from her elevated throne, and disdained not to appropriate more than a touch of seriousness and sentiment from the same source. Nevertheless, a new form of art was required to satisfy the craving for realism, for the vivid and truthful presentation of men and manners. Only in Italy, and perhaps in Spain, was the drama found equal to the task imposed upon it by popular demands. The novel stepped in to supplement the drama elsewhere, and its superior advantages as a medium for the exhibition of life have secured for it a decided, and in England an almost unchallenged, supremacy. The novel, of course, belongs essentially to the domain of prose, and our age has frequently been stigmatised as prosaic. But even the best poetry of the period in France emphatically

The Study of Man.

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satisfies the definition of being a "criticism of life," and the same is true of much good poetry in England, as for example, of the serious work of Johnson and Goldsmith, and the trifles of the more frivolous versifiers.

The "classical" tradition.

The mood of unquestioning acquiescence, which no searchings of heart have ever perturbed, requires little in the way of rapture or ecstasy for its adequate expression. Thus the literary tradition of the Augustan ages was eminently acceptable to the period which succeeded them. If strong passions and enthusiasm were out of place, not less so was a mode of speech which violated the laws and canons fixed by Boileau or Addison, and which had nothing to recommend it but extravagance and eccentricity. In England, two or three poets rose superior to some of these regulations, and, though their Pindarics were doubtless composed according to rule, contrived to throw a tolerable amount of emotion into measures both regular and irregular. It is not given even to poetical generations to produce much that is greatly superior in its own department to Gray's *Elegy*, or his *Ode on the Pleasure arising from Vicissitude*, or Collins's *Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands*. Even the verses on Robert Levet set a standard which only the greatest masters can surpass. But in France there were no such exceptions to the general rule, and in Germany we may fairly apply to Klopstock the celebrated remark of Burke about Sir Herbert Croft. Prose never during our period sank so low as poetry. In France

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it became if possible more supple, more exquisite, more refined, than it was before. In England, while it gained materially in lucidity and ease, it was preserved from the risk of subsiding into the commonplace by the memorable example of Johnson.

The century and its critics.

We have seen that the eighteenth century was not always sympathetic, or even intelligent, in its criticism of previous ages; and posterity has sometimes displayed the same faults in judging the eighteenth century. On the one hand, it has been denounced as the "mother of dead dogs," the parent of all sorts of "shams." On the other, it has been patted on the back, so to speak, and vindicated from such aspersions, because the men wore bloom-coloured coats, knee-breeches, and wigs, because the women wore hoops, and powder, and patches, and because both sexes practised the singular code of etiquette and manners so happily reproduced on the stage when some enterprising manager takes it into his head to revive Sheridan or Goldsmith. Between the two extremes of unqualified censure and mincing praise, comes the serious-minded critic to warn us that, reprehensible as the eighteenth century may have been in point of speech, behaviour, and conduct, "we must not forget" (so runs the formula) that it produced the Wesleyan Methodists, and wound up with the French Revolution: *argal*, there must have been some good in it. The preceding pages of this volume may perhaps dispense us from the duty of dealing seriously and *seriatim* with the different points

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of view which these opinions severally illustrate. We are now in all conscience sufficiently far removed in time to take a cool and impartial survey of the age whose proudest distinction it was once thought to have been to herald the advent of the wonderful nineteenth century. The men and women who flourished during its course are interesting, not because of the peculiarity or richness of their costume, but, because they were men and women like ourselves. If they were not the perfect and enlightened beings that they sometimes imagined, neither were they the blockheads and the scamps, the humbugs and the *poseurs*, which their descendants have sometimes professed to esteem them.

Conclusion.

That the great Romantic era should have thought little of the mid-eighteenth century was natural and excusable enough. The inevitable violence of reaction is in itself an adequate apology; and it must be owned that the "survivals" of the period—the men and women who clumsily aped the style and misrepresented the opinions of Johnson—were by no means attractive specimens of any literary epoch or movement. Moreover, the era of Romance had a good right to vilipend most other eras if it pleased. But can we say the same of our own time? Can we really afford to slight or to patronise Voltaire and Diderot, Butler and Hume, Fielding and Smollett, Johnson and Goldsmith, Gray and Collins? It is thought decidedly not, and therefore our better course will be to approach these and other great writers with a perfectly open mind, on

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the alert for their excellences, yet not wilfully blind to their shortcomings. The reader must be hard to please who, in the varied banquet set before him, fails to find a good many dishes to his mind; and, when he has exhausted the bill of fare, he will be indeed ungrateful and ungracious if he can muster up no more hearty and full-blooded eulogium upon those who provided the feast than that pronounced by Andrew Fairservice upon Rob Roy.

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